

PENTECOSTAL PRESBYTERIANS: RECLAIMING A
CALVINIST DOCTRINE OF HOLINESS IN A
PRESBYTERIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

PENTECOSTAL PRESBYTERIANS: A HOLINESS MANIFESTO RECLAIMING A CALVINIST/REFORMED DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

by

Jeff Foster

United Theological Seminary, 2014

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The goal of this project is nothing less than the complete transformation of a 200 year old congregation within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by way of a recovery and reemphasis of a Calvinist doctrine of holiness. The intent of the project is not so much the teaching of a doctrine as the reorientation of a congregation's life and ministry via a return to one of the central tenets of Reformed faith. The project is all encompassing and ongoing, more evolution than laboratory experiment. The results are difficult to quantify and will be measured using qualitative analysis supported by congregational statistics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As the old saying goes, “Time flies when you’re having fun.” As regards this author’s journey in the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary the saying could not be more appropriate. Where has the time gone? While it is sad to reflect upon the end of this leg of the journey it is at the same time exciting to anticipate the future with the knowledge that the journey truly never ends. The project itself is an ongoing journey in that God’s call to holiness is a perpetual call that we all live into as long as we sojourn on this earth together. Yet this phase of the project could not have been completed without a great deal of help from some very special people.

Many thanks are offered to the Professional and Context Associates who collaborated on the project and offered their time, wisdom, knowledge and experience. As they are all colleagues in ministry it is expected that this collaborative effort will not end at commencement but will itself be a part of the ongoing nature of the project until the Lord calls us all home to glory.

Special thanks are also offered to some of the greatest people in the world, the members of the *Prophetic Preaching and Praxis* peer group. We have become more than just peers in a doctoral program. Indeed we have grown in love for one another to such a degree that we are truly brothers and sisters in Christ. Thank God there is no doubt that relationship will continue long after the degrees have been awarded.

Special acknowledgement and thanks are also given to the members and congregants of New Jersey Presbyterian Church in Carlisle, Ohio, the context for this project. Without their love and support as well as their endurance and patience none of this could have been possible.

A special word of gratitude also goes to the mentors of the *Prophetic Preaching and Praxis* peer group, Dr. Robert Walker, Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr. and Dr. Keith Savage. Beyond their role as mentors, they have become true friends and colleagues in ministry. Mere words are insufficient to describe the value of their love and support.

Last but by no means least I would like to thank the most wonderful spouse in the world, my wife Yong Foster. For the past 35 years she has truly been my better half. Pastoral ministry is stressful enough on its own but when one adds in the extra stress of a doctoral project life can become overwhelming at times. I could not have accomplished this task without her love, support and patience.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Spiritual Autobiography

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” – Lao-tzu

Reflections upon the Journey

The process of writing a spiritual autobiography can be, to say the least, a transformative experience. One can indeed make the journey of a thousand miles one step at a time. In fact, there really is no other way. The trouble is that most of us stumble along on our journey with no clear sense of direction as to where we are going or where we have been. There are times along the way when we sense the call of God and, like Abram in Genesis 12:1-4, set out for points unknown trusting in God to show us the way. More often than not, however, the journey is more one of stumbling and wandering, arriving at a place without a clear sense of destiny. It is often the case that we see God more clearly in the rearview mirror than through the windshield. Such has been my experience as I survey the journey that placed me within this context.

The Journey Begins: The Early Years

I was born October 13, 1957 at Georgia Baptist Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia, the firstborn son of Jim and Sarah Foster. The three of us lived in southeast Atlanta for the first year of my life and then, in 1958, moved to Forest Park, a fast developing suburb

just outside the city limits of Atlanta to the south. Soon thereafter mom and dad decided to find a local church home. Mother had been a Baptist for most of her life and dad was from a long line of Methodists. When they began looking for a church home she was too much of a Baptist to return to the Methodism of her early childhood and he had no intention of ever becoming a Baptist. They decided to compromise and become Presbyterians. Hence, I was raised in the Philadelphia Presbyterian Church which was a congregation of the old southern denomination (Presbyterian Church in the United States) and is now affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA).¹

Philadelphia was a typical mainline protestant congregation, located as it was in Forest Park, an up and coming suburb with many young working families. There were lots of children and young families, with graded Sunday school classes and a large youth group. In retrospect, it seems that like most other suburban churches of that era life at Philadelphia was centered more in programs than in discipleship. Although we were schooled in scripture and the preaching was quite doctrinaire I don't recall ever really sensing any call to a deeper spiritual walk. Perhaps I just wasn't paying close attention or maybe my memory is faulty but what is more likely is that our church was more focused on church membership and programs than it was on calling people to an experience of heart holiness and the depth of discipleship such an experience leads to.

Being a Baptist at heart, mother resisted the idea of having her children baptized as infants. When I was 14 years old I thought it was time to go through catechism, be baptized and join the church but in my mind it was more about membership than discipleship or, much less, holiness of heart and life. At age 18 I joined the Navy music

¹ See Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon press, 1990), 203.

program as a Reed Instrumentalist and, although I had always had a fondness for and a connection to the Philadelphia church my faith, such as it was, was not strong enough to keep me connected to the church universal or even the Presbyterian denomination. I left home and walked away from Christ's church without as much as a fond farewell. God had other plans of course. After spending almost four years as a Navy Musician I met the woman I would eventually marry, a beautiful South Korean girl named Yong. It was through her influence that I eventually found my way back to the church.

Greenville First Church of the Nazarene (1991-1994)

In 1991 we found ourselves living in Greenville, South Carolina. After many years away from the church, Yong began attending services at First Church of the Nazarene. At that time the largest Korean congregation in Greenville was affiliated with that church and held services in one of their Sunday school rooms. For a while she attended services alone as she would always ask if I wanted to go with her and I always made some excuse for why I would rather not. Then, one day in the fall of 1991 she asked the usual question and I said yes. That particular morning and for several weeks thereafter she would attend the Korean service and I would attend the main service in the sanctuary. It wasn't long before the Korean congregation moved into their own building and Yong and I decided to make Greenville First our church home.

I had fallen in love with Greenville First Church and her people almost immediately. Their worship style was much freer than anything I had experienced before and it was more than just an emotional outpouring. Here was a congregation of people who seemed completely unpretentious and who were sincerely open to the leading of the

Holy Spirit both in their worship life and their public lives. As I began to get comfortable in those surroundings I found myself longing to know more about the Nazarenes and their understanding of Christian faith.

As I began to investigate further I learned that the Church of the Nazarene was born out of the American holiness movement in the late nineteenth century. As such, “The theological and doctrinal foundations of the Church of the Nazarene lie in the doctrines of Holiness and sanctification, as taught by John Wesley in the eighteenth-century revival in England.”² Wesleyan theology was an entirely new understanding for me. Growing up at Philadelphia Presbyterian I never heard about John Wesley or sanctification. We talked about John Calvin and predestination in Sunday school but never about sanctification. We talked a lot about salvation as forgiveness of sins but rarely, if ever about holiness of heart and life. But here at Greenville First Church of the Nazarene I found a group of people who believed very strongly in the power of God to not only forgive sins but to also transform hearts and lives. I did not fully understand that at the time. All I knew was that there was something different about these people and whatever it was they had, I wanted some of it.

Yong and I quickly became heavily involved in church work. Neither of us had ever been the type to attend church at a time other than Sunday morning. We soon found ourselves there on Sunday nights, Wednesday nights and every special service and revival meeting. In other words, we were there every time the doors were open. The staff at Greenville First had a real talent for discovering people’s gifts and challenging them to use those gifts for the church. It wasn’t long before someone discovered I was a musician. Pretty soon I was singing in the choir, playing saxophone in the praise band

² Mead, *Handbook of Denominations*, 90.

and serving as assistant to the Minister of Music. Additionally I was asked to serve as an assistant Sunday school teacher and was one of the first to get involved when the church launched its Personal Evangelism ministry. Church had become for us not just a place to go on Sunday morning but the very center of our lives.

Through it all I began to sense the call of God to preach the gospel. Having responded to that call the next step was to be licensed by the local congregation and pursue a theological education. Having already completed two years of a degree in Music Education all that was left to do was change majors and find a school where I could spend a couple of years completing the theological and practical requirements for the degree. In the fall of 1993 I was licensed by Greenville First Church of the Nazarene as a Local Pastor and headed off to finish my Bachelor of Arts in Pastoral Ministry at Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville, Tennessee.

The Trevecca Years (1994-1996)

One of the first people we met upon our arrival in Nashville was Rev. Kee Chae Han, pastor of Nashville Korean Church of the Nazarene. That church had originally been started as a mission of Nashville First Church of the Nazarene and had just taken over the property of the former Calvary Church of the Nazarene. For most of their brief history they had been able to rely on the mother church for support. At the time they moved into their new facility their membership was around 140, the congregation being made up of mostly young married couples and their children. Most of the children were bilingual but a fairly large number of them spoke English only. That had not been a problem when they were at Nashville First Church.

Now, however, youth ministry had become a huge problem. All of the worship services were in Korean and neither Pastor Han nor anyone else on the staff had the English language skills necessary to provide adequate youth ministry to this rather large group of mostly English speaking children. To further compound the problem there was a fairly large group of American adults, mostly men whose Korean wives were members of the church. They spoke no Korean at all and the church had great difficulty ministering to them in any meaningful way. What they really needed was an Associate Pastor, preferably an American, who could preach and teach in English. Pastor Han asked me if I would take the job, which solved a couple of problems on my end as well. It provided me with an income while also enabling me to gain valuable ministry experience and a place to serve my pastoral internship. I gladly accepted the offer and began my theological education and active ministry simultaneously.

One of the challenges the church realized early on was that their youth and English speaking adults were really being short changed with regard to their worship life. While the church did have a good Christian Education program there was only one weekly worship service and it was in Korean. Even though some of the young people were conversant in Korean none of them were fluent enough to sing from the Korean hymnbook, let alone understand one of Pastor Han's sermons. Then there were those who did not understand any Korean. They were hearing the Word proclaimed and not understanding a word of it. Something needed to be done, and fast. It was decided that the church would go to double services and that I would lead an early service, in English, each Sunday morning at nine o'clock. As a result I gained valuable preaching and pastoral leadership experience very early in my ministry career.

Trevecca itself was a fabulous experience. I could not have asked for a better place to begin my theological education. The Bachelor of Arts in Pastoral Ministry is designed to satisfy the course of study requirements for ordination in the Church of the Nazarene. As such, it is a very well rounded and intense program of study. The professors were all extremely well educated people, each of whom had a real heart for the church. They were also very approachable and genuinely dedicated to the task of developing ministers of the Gospel. It has been almost twenty years since graduation and some of those people are friends and colleagues to this day. Trevecca was truly a life changing place.

The Vanderbilt Years (1997-2000)

Upon graduation from Trevecca I had satisfied the educational requirements for ordination. In fact, I was ordained an Elder in the summer of 1997. Be that as it may, I still had an insatiable thirst for knowledge and felt that Trevecca had only prepared me to move on to the next level of scholarship. I chose to take that next step at Vanderbilt Divinity School. A variety of reasons could be given for that decisions but the most important reason was that David Buttrick was still teaching there. I had been introduced to his work in a Homiletics course at Trevecca and was intrigued with his approach to the discipline. I had read all of his books and had immersed myself in his major work, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*.³ I had developed a great passion for homiletics and could not think of anyone better to study with than Prof. Buttrick. I entered the Divinity School as a first year Master of Divinity student in the fall of 1997.

³ David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987).

Along the way, a major change had taken place in my ministry. In December of 1995, while still a senior at Trevecca, I had answered the call to become the pastor of Centerville Church of the Nazarene, a small church in a small town about fifty miles west of Nashville. As I look back on that decision, I sometimes think it was not one of my wiser moves. Perhaps I should have spent more time in prayer before accepting that call. It only took two years to realize that things were not going to work out. The gap between their expectations for me and my expectations for them was too great. Not only was the congregation not growing under my ministry, it was actually shrinking. Rather than preside over the demise of the congregation Yong and I decided it was best to move on.

My original plan was to move back to Nashville and pursue a PhD at Vanderbilt. Again, it seemed God had other plans for the very day I was to submit my letter of resignation I received a telephone call from my friend who was the District Superintendent of the Columbia District United Methodist Church. One of their local churches, the Hohenwald Circuit, had lost their minister to illness and he wanted to know if I would be willing to take the appointment on an interim basis. After meeting with representatives of the church and spending much time in prayer Yong and I decided this was where God was leading us. I accepted the appointment and began my ministry there on the first Sunday of January, 1998.

Hohenwald Circuit consisted of two churches with a total membership of around 170 people. The smaller church, Haley's Chapel, averaged around thirty five in morning worship attendance while the larger church, Oak Grove, averaged about seventy. Hohenwald was a nice place to live and serve. Yong and I immediately fell in love with the people and the feeling was mutual. When appointment time came around that spring

they asked to have me appointed there full time. I served there until 2001 and there are many times I wish I was still there. They were a wonderful congregation and I miss them terribly.

As for my time at Vanderbilt there is no doubt the highlight was studying Homiletics and Liturgics with Professor Buttrick. Not only did he teach me a lot about sermon construction, he taught me a great deal about theology as it relates to proclamation. Professor Buttrick stresses the need to preach the kingdom of God as God's new social order in Jesus as the Christ. I learned to craft sermons that trade on vivid imagery so that congregations can be enabled to envision a new world. Or in Professor Buttrick's words, "We preach the future of God so people can change. We get up in our pulpits and announce the coming of God's new order, for only some image of a new world, bright and right and reconciled, can give us courage to change."⁴ "Why do we preach the kingdom of God? Only by preaching the future of God can a sense of God's presence once more fill the land."⁵ I learned how to give people a vision of the kingdom of God as present reality and invite them to live in it. My preaching took on a whole new dimension and the people in Hohenwald were quite receptive to what they were hearing.

The Far Country (2001 – 2004)

The 2000 presidential election was a dark time for America. American politics have always been polarized to some degree, a largely unavoidable consequence of a two party system. Yet it seems that American politics and society in general have been

⁴ David Buttrick, *Preaching the New and the Now* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 19.

⁵ Ibid., 22.

increasingly polarized since at least the late 1970s and the rise of the Moral Majority. That said the 2000 presidential election took polarization to a new level of nastiness. Unfortunately, the hateful and angry tone of the election managed to rain down its cancerous fallout on my ministry in Hohenwald.

Prior to the 2000 election the people at Oak Grove and Haley's Chapel had never expressed any discontent with the political nature of my preaching. The majority of them were partisan Democrats and my preaching tended to line up with their worldview for the most part. All that changed in November of 2000 when I took a swipe at one of their favorite politicians, Vice President Al Gore. What they should have known by that time is that I was not (and still am not) a political partisan. The intention of the sermon in question was not to advocate for one party or the other but rather to point out the folly of the thinking at that time which had people hanging on the outcome of that election as if the salvation of the world were at stake.

In the days leading up to the election Vice President Gore was making the rounds of black churches, putting on his black preacher persona, and giving a speech (a sermon really) entitled "Take Your Souls to the Polls." The idea behind the Vice President's sermon was that the election was a choice between good and evil. The implication, though not stated outright, was that a vote for Gore was a vote for God. It so happened that the Psalm of the day for that particular Sunday was Psalm 146 which reads, "Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help (Psalm 146:3 NRSV)." I took my text from Psalm 146 that Sunday night and boldly stated that Al Gore was right. You should take your souls to the polls. Get on your knees, pray for God's guidance and then go to the polls and vote for the candidate that most closely represents your values as

a Christian. But do not be surprised if your man wins and does not immediately save the world. Never make the mistake of thinking God is a Democrat or a Republican. God is not much into princes and presidents although he did send us a king one time and not only did we not vote for him we nailed him to a cross.

The partisan Democrats at Oak Grove and Haley's Chapel were not amused. In the spring of 2001 they were still brooding over that sermon. In consultation with the Pastor Parish Relations Committee I was told that they wanted me to stay but that I had to promise I would never again say anything political from the pulpit. I was unable to make such a promise and all but begged them to reconsider. They decided instead to ask the District Superintendent to move me and send them a new pastor. Regrettably we were unable to reconcile that one major difference and my ministry in Hohenwald ended in the summer of 2001 as I was sent off to serve a parish in the far country.

The far country was just west of Hohenwald in neighboring Perry County which at the time was one of the most rural counties in the state and the far western border of the Tennessee Annual Conference. The running joke in the district was that Perry County wasn't the far country but you could see it from there. Once again I was appointed to a two point charge with two very rural churches, Whitwell Chapel and Cedar Grove. It seemed like a good move at the time since Yong and I owned a house just a few miles from Whitwell Chapel and we also had some business interests in the county seat of Linden. The appointment was part time which enabled me to pursue my business interests while at the same time staying engaged in ministry. By the end of the second year it was clear that things were not going to work out.

The problems that developed were more personal than they were theological. No one seemed to have any problem with my preaching. In fact, Whitwell Chapel was growing and thriving under my ministry. The problem was that some of the people objected to the way I conducted my personal affairs. In particular they were unhappy with the fact that I played in a rock band and that the band regularly performed in night clubs and other venues where alcohol was served. They were intent on stuffing me into the mold of what they thought a pastor should look like. Meanwhile, in March of 2003 my father died after a long illness. I was actually the only one present when he died and I preached his funeral. He and I had always been close and the loss was very devastating personally. I simply did not have the strength to endure my grief while at the same time fighting with a congregation over what seemed to me to be trivial personal matters. In the summer of 2003 I asked the District Superintendent to appoint someone else and decided to step away from the ministry until such time as I had the strength to continue.

Going Home (2004 – 2007)

My mother was not holding up very well after dad's death either. They had sold their home in Forest Park and retired to Blairsville in the mountains of North Georgia after he got sick. After his death she found herself living in the mountains, far away from her family and most of her friends. She was lonely, isolated and quite bored. In the fall of 2003 she told me that she was thinking of coming out of retirement and going back into the real estate business. I had been dabbling in real estate off and on since the early nineties when we lived in South Carolina. After leaving the church I had gone into real estate full time and was taking advantage of the real estate boom. The area around

Blairsville, Georgia was one of the hottest real estate markets in the country at that time. People were flocking there from all over the country to buy second homes and retirement homes in the mountains. Mom wanted to get in on the boom and I wanted to get out of Perry County, Tennessee. I figured I could be a real estate agent anywhere and it might be good for the two of us to work together so, in January of 2004, Yong and I sold our house in Tennessee and moved to Blairsville.

We had not been in church for several months at that time and had no intention of returning. God had other plans of course. Once we got settled in and put a little distance between ourselves and the bad memories in Tennessee I began to sense a need to worship. Mother had been a member at Blairsville Church of the Nazarene for a number of years. I had preached there many times and loved the people but did not want to attend there for that very reason. I did not want to preach or teach or sing in the choir or do any of the other things I knew they would ask me to do. I just wanted to worship and needed to find a church where no one would know me. I chose Mountain Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Yong and I attended worship at Mountain Presbyterian several times before I let anyone know that I was a minister. I eventually decided I wanted to become more involved in the life of the church and asked the minister, Rev. Travis Adams, to go to lunch with me. I told him my story and he set about helping me ease into a more active role in the church. I joined the choir and began teaching Sunday school. Travis and I became close friends and Yong and I also forged close bonds with several of the members. They helped us put our past hurts in the past and in a sense rehabilitated me such that I could consider entering the pastoral ministry again. After attending there for

several months Travis asked if I would consider becoming a Presbyterian minister. I told him I was interested and he shepherded me through the long process of joining the Northeast Georgia Presbytery. Along the way I was asked by the District Superintendent of the Gainesville District, North Georgia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church if I would be willing to serve a part time appointment in the Blairsville area. I was a bit reluctant but Travis convinced me it would be a good way to serve while I was going through the process of becoming a Presbyterian minister. I eventually agreed to do it and from 2005 through 2007 served as the pastor of Confidence United Methodist Church in Blairsville, Georgia.

I stayed in close contact with Travis Adams and my friends at Mountain Presbyterian as well as the members of the Committee on Ministry of the Northeast Georgia Presbytery. I completed all of the steps for Presbytery membership and at the March 2007 meeting of Presbytery was received as a Member at Large with special permission to serve at Confidence until the 2007 meeting of the North Georgia Annual Conference when my appointment to Confidence officially came to an end. Standing next to me when I was introduced to the Presbytery was none other than the Rev. Bill Hines, the pastor who baptized me and received me into the membership of Philadelphia Presbyterian Church way back when I was a young boy in Forest Park. Things had come full circle in some sense.

Coming Home: New Jersey Presbyterian Church (2007 – Present)

I spent the summer and fall of 2007 serving as the Parish Associate for Mountain Presbyterian Church and doing pulpit supply work in the Northeast Georgia Presbytery while seeking a full time call. To say the least, I was shocked by the response I got when I submitted my Pastor's Information Form. I received inquiries from churches as far away as Hibbing, Minnesota. I was interviewing with two churches in Florida and one in metro Atlanta when I got a call from the Pastoral Nominating Committee of New Jersey Presbyterian Church (hereinafter NJPC) in Carlisle, Ohio. After a couple of conference calls and one face to face meeting I was convinced this was where God was leading. Early in October Yong and I made a trip to Ohio. We met with the congregation and the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley, I preached and the congregation voted overwhelmingly to call me as their next pastor, a position I have held since November First, 2007.

I am now in my seventh year at NJPC. The church has grown each year I have been here. Early on, God blessed the church with a number of young families, many of whom came from Baptist and Holiness backgrounds. Several of them were essentially un-churched and came to faith in Christ through the ministry of NJPC. In fact, most of the growth NJPC has experienced has come as a result of the church's evangelistic efforts. Unlike many other Presbyterian churches their size (151 active members) NJPC is young and getting younger all the time as the new members reach out to their un-churched friends and family members.

As for me, my thirst for knowledge continues, which has led me to pursue the Doctor of Ministry degree at United Theological Seminary. Along the way, I have come

to realize that God never meant for me to leave my experiences in the Church of the Nazarene and the United Methodist Church behind. The journey carried me through those churches for a reason. My call has begun to be redefined as I have come to realize that God wants me to bring my experience in the Holiness tradition to bear on the ministry in my current context. Why shouldn't I after all? It is not as if Presbyterians don't believe in sanctification. Presbyterians do believe in sanctification. It's just that many of them don't know it. As Presbyterian theologian the late Shirley Guthrie Jr. points out, "Justification tells us that God is *for* us, forgiving and saving us from sin. Sanctification tells us that by the Holy Spirit the same God works *in* us, helping us to leave our sin behind and begin a new and radically different kind of life. In Justification the covenant-making God makes a promise: 'I will be your God.' In sanctification, the same God also gives an inescapable command: 'You shall be my people.'"⁶ Justification and sanctification go together like a hand and glove. I am convinced the witness of the church (not just the Presbyterian Church but any church) is compromised when we focus on one to the exclusion of the other.

Partly as a result of undertaking this project my ministry has taken a new direction. I have come to see myself for what I believe I have been called to be all along, a holiness preacher in a Presbyterian pulpit. The people at NJPC have already begun to respond very positive ways. I believe God is in the process of doing something very special in and through the people of NJPC and has privileged me to be a part of it. The road has been long and at times hard. The journey has been long but I am fully convinced I have found my way home.

⁶ Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr., *Christian Doctrine* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 331.

Context

What's In a Name? A Brief History Lesson

People who are not from Carlisle always ask the same question when they hear of New Jersey Presbyterian Church for the first time. Why is a church in Carlisle, Ohio named New Jersey? The answer to the question cannot help but take the form of a history lesson. In order to understand the reason for the name one must first come to an understanding of the history of Carlisle and New Jersey Presbyterian Church. The two go hand in hand.

The area that is now Carlisle began to be settled not long after the establishment of the Northwest Territory in 1787. "By 1800 and in the next few years a number of families settled between the Miami River and Twin Creek, and this area became known as the Jersey Settlement" because, "Most of the people who came to this area were from New Jersey."⁷

As for the establishment of NJPC: "The Jersey families were of the Presbyterian faith and held church services in their homes, or in large barns. The Lane barn along the Miami River, toward what is now Chautauqua, was often used as a place for church gatherings. This barn was swept away in the 1913 flood. On August 14, 1813, the first meeting had been held at the William Barkalow home along the Miami River. In 1815 the New Jersey Presbyterian Church was built at what is now Jamaica Road and Fairview Drive."⁸

⁷ Harriet Foley, ed., Harriet Foley, ed., *Carlisle, the Jersey Settlement in Ohio* (Middletown, OH: Naegele-Auer Printing Co., 1980), 15.

⁸ Ibid., 16.

NJPC has been in continuous existence since being organized on August 14, 1813 and has held services in the same location on the corner of Jamaica Rd. and Fairview Dr. since 1815. NJPC was the second church to be organized in the area, with Stettler's Lutheran Church having been organized in 1803.⁹ With the establishment of Tapscott Baptist Church in 1814 NJPC became one of three Christian congregations holding services in the Jersey Settlement.¹⁰ Both Tapscott Baptist and Stettler's Lutheran churches have long since ceased to exist as active congregations, making NJPC the oldest congregation in Carlisle.

Although the Jersey Settlement was originally established as a farming community it wasn't long before industrialization impacted the area in a major way:

As the 1800's gave way to industrialization across the nation, Carlisle became a stopping point for the railroad community. This relationship is quite evident today with two major railroad thoroughfares traversing through the heart of the City. The City's annual community festival, Railroad Days, further reflects this long-standing relationship. In the mid-18th century, a prominent railroad man, George B. Carlisle, bought and platted a large section of the community. Because of Mr. Carlisle's influence on the community, the area was eventually officially named Carlisle. Carlisle was officially incorporated in 1958.¹¹

As is often the case, the church is more resistant to change than society at large. Perhaps it is the case that the church is more respectful of history and ancestral tradition.

Whatever the case, if anyone ever suggested changing NJPC's name to something more in keeping with the times like, for example, Carlisle Presbyterian Church, that suggestion

⁹ Foley, *Carlisle, the Jersey Settlement*, 38.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹¹ City of Carlisle, "History of Carlisle," City of Carlisle, accessed November 3, 2010, <http://www.carlisleoh.org/index.asp/history>.

was never seriously considered. So then, there on the corner of Jamaica Rd. and Fairview Dr., sharing a parking lot with the Carlisle City building, sits New Jersey Presbyterian Church, one of the oldest Christian congregations in the Miami Valley.

Although the church has been in existence since 1813, the original church building was completed sometime in 1816. As to the building itself, “Very little is known, definitely, as to the time in which it was completed, or the circumstances attending its building, not a single entry having been made respecting these matters, and nearly all the facts and incidents having entirely passed from the memory of the living.”¹² What is known is that the original building was constructed to resemble as closely as possible the Old Tennent Church in Freehold, New Jersey and was replaced by a second, larger and more substantial building in 1867. The first service was held in the new building on December 8th, 1867 and the building was officially dedicated on September 5th, 1868.¹³ That building stood until it was destroyed by a fire on December 5th, 1920.¹⁴ The current building was dedicated on July 9th, 1922.¹⁵ The current educational and office wing was completed in 1967.¹⁶

Area Demographics

Carlisle is located in northwestern Warren County, in Franklin Township. The city is bordered by the Great Miami River to the south and east, Butler County to the west and Montgomery County to the north. Just across the Great Miami from Carlisle are the

¹² Charles and Martha Chamberlain, *New Jersey Presbyterian Church 1813-1988* (Carlisle, OH: New Jersey Presbyterian Church: 1988), 12.

¹³Ibid. 25.

¹⁴Ibid., 125.

¹⁵Ibid., 129.

¹⁶Ibid., 131.

cities of Franklin and Miamisburg. Germantown is to the north. That part of Butler County that lies directly to the west of the city is considered part of greater Middletown. While Carlisle was for many years a small farming village and railroad community, it is today part of the Cincinnati Dayton statistical area, surrounded on all sides by suburban sprawl. Just thirty minutes from Cincinnati and twenty minutes from downtown Dayton, Carlisle is, for all intents and purposes, a bedroom community of greater Dayton.

The population of Carlisle, as of the 2010 census¹⁷, was just over 5000 people. Economically speaking, Carlisle could best be classified as “working class” or “blue collar.” According to the 2010 census the median household income in Carlisle is \$53,125. There is very little industry in the immediate area and most of the working age residents are skilled laborers and factory workers who are employed by large companies like General Motors and AK Steel. That demographic is changing somewhat since General Motors closed the Moraine Assembly Plant in 2009. Whereas low property values had made Carlisle an attractive place for GM employees to settle down and raise their families, many of those people are now being forced to move away in search of employment with the result that population growth is now in decline.

The area offers very few employment opportunities for college educated professionals. Only 7.9% of Carlisle residents have a bachelor’s degree or above compared with 28.5% nationwide.¹⁸ A couple of obvious exceptions to that rule are in the areas of education and health care. A number of Carlisle residents are employed in hospitals and nursing homes throughout the Miami Valley. Most of the teachers in the

¹⁷United States Census Bureau, “Carlisle Village Quick Facts,” United States Census Bureau, accessed February 5, 2014, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/39/3912168.html>.

¹⁸Ibid.

school system live in the area and many of them are members of NJPC. Many of NJPC's members are either current or retired school teachers and the church has a long tradition of working closely with the schools, located as it is directly across the street from all the schools in the Carlisle Local School District. Since school teachers and most healthcare workers are not what would be considered high income professionals these residents tend to fall into place with the general population in that regard.¹⁹

Church Demographics

According to official denominational records NJPC had 146 active members as of December 31, 2013.²⁰ The ages of those members break down as follows:

25 & Under:	10
26-45:	35
46-55:	17
56-65:	34
Over 65:	50 ²¹

Of Course, average worship attendance is a better indicator than is total membership. Average attendance for the year 2013 was eighty two. This number too does not tell the whole story with regard to the health of the congregation. The truth is that worship attendance, beginning in the year 2001 went on a severe downhill slide, from an average of 125 in the year 2000 to a low of seventy one in 2007. Attendance began to trend upward shortly after I was installed as pastor in November of 2007. 2008 was a good year with an average attendance of eighty seven. In the years 2009 and 2010

¹⁹For a more detailed look at area demographics see Appendix A, which is an in depth demographic study of the area within a 2 mile radius of the church.

²⁰ Presbyterian Mission Agency, "Carlisle New Jersey, OH All Statistics Report," accessed February 5, 2014, http://apps.pcusa.org/tenyeartrends/report/6463/all_statistics.jsp.

²¹For a complete breakdown of church demographics see Appendix B.

attendance numbers trended back downward with a reported attendance of seventy eight in 2009 and only seventy three in 2010.²² Then they began to rise again with an average of seventy five in 2012 and eighty two in 2013. So far in 2014 the average has been eighty four and attendance continues to rise.

From the beginning of 2012 until the present time only 8 members have been removed from the active roll due to death. This is perhaps the most telling number of all. The average age of the congregation is trending downward as more young families choose to make NJPC their church home. One indication of this youth movement is that sixty children between the ages of four years and sixth grade attended the church's most recent Vacation Bible School.

The Changing Face of a Congregation: Trends for a New Millennium

For most of its long history, NJPC has been fairly typical of a small town Presbyterian congregation. Until very recent years the majority of the members have been people who were born and raised in and around Carlisle and Franklin and whose family connections to the congregation went back several generations. Many families were direct descendants of the founding families of both NJPC and the village of Carlisle (New Jersey Settlement). That is no longer true however. As of this writing there is only one member that can trace his roots back to the founding members of the church. The majority of the members are people who either were not born and raised in the area or whose family ties to the area go back only a generation or two.

²² Presbyterian Mission Agency, "Carlisle New Jersey, OH All Statistics Report," accessed February 5, 2014, http://apps.pcusa.org/tenyeartrends/report/6463/all_statistics.jsp.

Many of the people who have joined the church in the past few years are not from Presbyterian backgrounds. Most of them are either former Baptists or have no church background at all. Many of the people who attend worship at NJPC are new to the church and have yet to actually become members. These are all younger adults and children, many of whom are un-churched or come from a variety of different Christian traditions. These people bring an air of excitement to the life of NJPC while at the same time presenting the congregation with the challenge of establishing a congregational identity that reflects the theological and ideological diversity of both the people in the pews and the people in the community at large. That process is ongoing. To understand the nature of such a challenge one must look once again at the history of the congregation and its ministry area.

There is a sense in which one can say the state of Ohio was established by Presbyterians. Certainly that statement would hold true for the Carlisle area. While by no means escaping all of the ugliness of post-civil war race relations, Ohio has a long tradition of opposition to slavery, much of which is rooted in the theological convictions of Scottish Presbyterians. According to E.B. Welsh:

Ohio, seventeenth state in the building of the American Union, became a proving ground for democracy, for free and universal education, and for a church wholly free and independent. The Ordinance of 1787, which set up the Northwest Territory, out of which Ohio was the first state carved, was prepared largely by a New England clergyman, Manasseh Cutler. One pronouncement written into that document has colored the entire history of the Ohio commonwealth to this day. Article III. "Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall be forever encouraged." Article VI reads in part: "There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude otherwise than in punishment of crime." Thus the seed was sifted for planting in

Ohio soil. There is abundant evidence that the early settlers of the Buckeye State were by a large majority men whose convictions were in accord with the provisions of the Ordinance, and that they chose this new country for their new homes just because it was committed to education and to freedom for all men.

Both these principles – human freedom and universal education – had been espoused by the Scottish reformers. The various Presbyterian bodies in America, which all stemmed from Scotland, had subscribed allegiance to them. So it is not surprising that Presbyterians of varying shades of blue predominated among those who came swarming from the east, the northeast and the south as soon as valid land titles could be secured, and even before. There were among them representatives of the Associate, Associate Reformed and Reformed Presbyterians, but earliest and most numerous were the Presbyterians U.S.A., for they had been found in America from early colonial times, had been organized into a presbytery as early as 1706, and were established in all thirteen colonies well before the War for Independence.²³

The area in and around Carlisle was strongly identified with Presbyterians from the northeast in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The twentieth century, however, was another story entirely.

With the rise of the industrial age, the early twentieth century saw many southerners, particularly southerners from Appalachia, move north in search of factory jobs. “Many West Virginians and Kentuckians (especially from Magoffin County) migrated to the industrial cities of Ohio, for jobs in rubber and steel.”²⁴ “Some Ohio companies (including Champion Paper Company, Lorillard Tobacco Company, and Armco Steel) reportedly recruited their labor force from specific counties in the mountains, and gave preference to employee’s family members when hiring new

²³ E.B. Welsh, ed., *Buckeye Presbyterianism* (Wooster, OH: United Presbyterian Synod of Ohio, 1968), 9.

²⁴ Jack Temple Kirby, *The Southern Exodus, 1910-1960: A Primer for Historians*, *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. XLIX, No. 4, Nov. 1983, 585.

workers, making out-migration from rural Appalachia easier.”²⁵ Being located next door to Franklin (a paper mill city) and just a few miles from Middletown (home of Armco Steel), it follows that a great number of these people would settle in and around Carlisle. They brought with them not only a taste of Appalachian culture but Appalachian religion as well. NJPC transitioned from being the mother church in Carlisle to being one church among the many in the middle twentieth century to its current status as a relative theological minority in an area that is now dominated by Baptists from the south.

Not that there is anything wrong with Baptists from the south. In fact, this may be the most exciting time in history for NJPC. Once upon a time the congregation could survive and even thrive without putting forth much, if any, effort in terms of evangelistic outreach. When most of the citizenry is Presbyterian and there is only one Presbyterian congregation in town the church will naturally grow as the town grows. Now, if the church has any desire to grow it must be very deliberate in its efforts to evangelize the community. Such is true nationwide in fact. Whereas there was once a time when one could almost equate Christianity with American citizenship, those days are long gone. Now, you have to be a Christian on purpose. That is especially true for Presbyterians in Carlisle, Ohio.

Staff and Leadership

Of course, no church can thrive without strong leadership. The church board of NJPC is set up in three divisions consisting of the Session, Board of Deacons and Board of Trustees, the first two being ordained positions with the latter being elected church

²⁵Kirby, *The Southern Exodus*, 598.

members who may or may not be ordained. As for the Session (elders) and Board of Deacons, the Presbyterian Book of Order reads as follows:

All ministry in the church is a gift from Jesus Christ. Members and officers alike serve mutually under the mandate of Christ who is the chief minister of all. His ministry is the basis of all ministries; the standard for all offices is the pattern of the one who came “not to be served but to serve.” (Matt. 20:28)

One responsibility of membership in the church is the election of officers who are ordained to fulfill particular functions. The existence of these offices in no way diminishes the importance of the commitment of all members to the total ministry of the church. These ordained officers differ from other members in function only.

The Church offices mentioned in the New Testament which this church has maintained include those of presbyters (ministers of the Word and Sacrament and elders) and deacons.²⁶

According to the *Book of Order*, “Elders are chosen by the people. Together with ministers of the Word and Sacrament, they exercise leadership, government, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a particular church as well as the church at large, including ecumenical relationships.”²⁷ The Session of NJPC is organized into four committees. Those are Christian Education, Worship and Fellowship, Long Range Planning and Stewardship and Evangelism and Mission. “The office of elder or deacon is perpetual and no one can lay it aside at pleasure or be divested of it except as provided in this Form of Government or the Rules of Discipline.”²⁸ Further, “An elder serving on session, or a deacon on a board of deacons, shall be elected for a term of no more than three years, and service in consecutive terms, either full or partial, shall be limited to six

²⁶ *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II, Book of Order 2011-2013* (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly, 2011), G-6.0100-0103.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, G-6.0302.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, G-14.0210.

years. An elder or deacon having served a total of six years shall be ineligible for reelection to the same board for a period of at least one year.”²⁹ At this time, the total number of persons serving on the Session is nine and the total number of persons serving on the Board of Deacons is nine.

As mentioned, NJPC also has a Board of Trustees, which is optional under the *Book of Order*. “Any particular church which is not incorporated may select trustees from the members on the active roll of the church. The power and duties of such trustees shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the session or of the board of deacons.”³⁰ The corporation so formed, or the individual trustees, shall have the following powers: to receive, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer property, real or personal, for the church; to accept and execute deeds of title to such property; to hold and defend title to such property; to manage any permanent special funds for the furtherance of the purposes of the church, all subject to the authority of the session and under the provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).”³¹ The Board of Trustees of NJPC is a very active and hard-working board. They maintain the cemetery as well as the church physical plant. In addition, they are responsible for managing a rather sizable endowment which is spread out over a number of investment accounts and also serving in an advisory role in helping the Session plan the annual budget.

All in all, the leaders of the various ministry groups within NJPC do a good job but, as with any organization, there is always room for improvement and we continue to

²⁹*Book of Order*, G-14.0222.

³⁰*Ibid.*, G-7.0401.

³¹*Ibid.*, G-7.0402.

strive to be more effective. Borrowing from the M.B.W.A. (Management by Wandering Around) model popularized by Tom Peters, Lovett Weems Jr. advocates the practice of “Ministry by Wandering Around.”³² I learned the Peters model in management training in the secular world back in the 1980s and have practiced the same management strategy since coming to NJPC, attending the various board meetings, study groups and ministry events and observing what is done well and what areas could stand improvement. The following are some observations gleaned from experience.

The Session

The elders of the NJPC Session work very well together. After a recent visit by representatives of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley Committee on Ministry the comment was made that they were very impressed by the collegiality of the Session. They said it was obvious that the elders get along well together and have a good working relationship. Additionally, it was noted that the Session exhibits sound leadership qualities. Still, there is at least one major area that could stand improvement. It seems the elders have never been encouraged to become strong spiritual leaders. Apparently there has long been a culture in which elders see themselves more as administrators than as spiritual leaders. But, in addition to being administrative leaders the PCUSA constitution also states that “It is the duty of elders, individually and jointly, to strengthen and nurture the faith and life of the congregation committed to their charge.”³³ This understanding flows from the classical Protestant doctrine of the “priesthood of all believers.”

³² Lovett G. Weems, Jr., *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture and Integrity* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 53.

³³ *Book of Order*, G-6.0304a.

The universal priesthood means that each person is a priest to every other; one can, in Luther's words, be a Christ to the neighbor. No believer can exist merely unto self; the believer always stands in the church, which is a "mutual ministry of believers."

Perhaps no principle of Protestantism is more thoroughly exhibited in its institutional development than this one. The Protestant "minister," "preacher," "pastor," or "rector" is set apart for the performance of certain functions in the church, but is only one among equals in the community of faith. For the sake of discipline, and perhaps of tradition, there may be a hierarchy of authority in the church, but the distinction is essentially functional. "Clergy" and "laity" are on one level in their responsibility to the gospel and to each other.³⁴

For some reason we seem to have lost that understanding in the American church.

Perhaps it has to do with the church's location within a capitalistic society which causes church people to see "clergy" as the professionals who are being paid to do ministry and congregants as customers who receive ministry. Whatever the case, NJPC is in the process of recovering its roots in the Reformed Protestant tradition and there is a need for the Session to model the priesthood of all believers to the congregation at large.

The Board of Deacons

According to the *Book of Order*, "It is the duty of deacons, first of all, to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress both within and beyond the community of faith."³⁵ The Board of Deacons of NJPC has always done a respectable job of ministering to the sick and needy within the congregation but more could be done to minister to the sick and needy outside the community of faith.

³⁴ John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity Interpreted Through Its Development, Second Edition* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), 354.

³⁵ *Book of Order*, G-6.0402a.

With regard to those who are in need, the deacons operate a food pantry for the needy. They also distribute food boxes to needy families at Thanksgiving and gifts to needy children at Christmas. Additionally, several of the deacons volunteer their time working at the Franklin Food Pantry. All of these are worthy ministries. If there is one criticism it would be that more needs to be done in terms of identifying and reaching out to the needy in the community. The food pantry, for example, serves those who ask for help but an examination of their records shows that most of the people who have received help over the past ten years have been the same handful of people over and over again. There are no doubt plenty of people in the community who need help and either do not know about the food pantry or are too proud to ask for help. Beyond that, it seems that more could be done to minister to the spiritual needs of the people that do receive help. Rarely, if ever, is a person helped by the deacons and then subsequently incorporated into the life of the church. Also, more could be done in terms of inspiring members of the congregation at large to participate more in ministries of compassion.

Progress is being made on that front however. One of the Deacons (who, incidentally is a context associate on this project) came up with a wonderful idea for a new ministry called "Blessings in a Bag." It occurred to her that there are a number of underprivileged school children who do not receive adequate nutrition when they are away from school, especially on the weekends. The Blessings in a Bag ministry has worked with the school nurse to identify families who qualify for the program and, rather than waiting for them to contact the food pantry, the deacons deliver food to the school each Thursday afternoon and that food is in turn sent home with the children when school lets out on Friday. As of this writing fifty five children are being served by this ministry.

This is a great example of what can happen when the Holy Spirit inspires someone to think outside the box and find ways to serve the community with the Gospel.

Trustees

As mentioned before, the job of trustee requires a special level of commitment and there is a fair amount of physical labor involved. The trustees, in addition to managing a large endowment which is spread out over a number of investment accounts, are also responsible for managing the cemetery and maintaining the church grounds and physical plant. The building itself received a number of upgrades over the past twelve years or so but it is still an old structure and subject to all of the associated maintenance headaches. The trustees do a wonderful job and NJPC is blessed to have them. The greatest weakness in that area is the difficulty in finding people who are willing to serve.

For the most part, the problem is that they are unable to serve inasmuch as their lives are incredibly full. Between working long hours at their jobs and all the extra-curricular activities their children participate in it is a wonder any of them have time to come to church on Sunday morning, much less commit their time to serving on a church board. Such is life in twenty first century America. The good news is that the trustees do a good job of motivating the members to help out when needed. Even better news is the fact that the trustees are learning to see themselves as more than just the building and grounds maintenance crew. Rather than just being guardians of financial investments they are working closely with the session on finding ways to use the endowment funds for the furtherance of the church's mission.

Staff

In addition to the pastor, the paid staff consists of a secretary, pianist/organist and a person who does double duty as Director of Music and Director of Youth and Children's Ministries. All of these people are highly competent professionals and NJPC is fortunate to have each one of them. The Youth Director/Director of Music is a professional actress and singer with years of experience on stage and in the theater. She brings both an extraordinary musical talent and a sincere heart for ministry. The pianist/organist is also a professional musician and retired public school music teacher. The secretary is really much more than a church secretary. She runs the sound and power point presentation during worship and performs a plethora of other duties throughout the week, everything from answering the telephone to overseeing the Vacation Bible School and many other duties far outside the normal scope of a clerical worker. We see her as a vital member of the ministry team who just happens to also be the church secretary. As it stands now, the worship life of the church is vital and exciting, due in no small part to the contributions of the ministry staff.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY FOCUS

John Calvin, among other Protestant reformers, believed that preaching was central to the life of the church. According to Calvin, “Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists [cf. Eph. 2:20].”¹ Inasmuch as the focus of this project is a doctrine of holiness as it relates to prophetic preaching and praxis it seems a discussion of preaching itself might be a good place to begin. More will be said about prophetic preaching and praxis in the next chapter. The focus here will be on the actual discipline of preaching and the place of preaching, in particular holiness preaching, in the life of the worshipping community. If we truly believe that the preaching of the Word is foundational to the very existence of the church then it follows we would do everything in our power to be the best preachers we can be.

The decline of so-called liberal mainline denominations is certainly no secret to anyone. As recently as May of 2013 the Office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) released a report which showed a net loss of 102,791 members in 2012 alone.² Here in the Presbytery of the Miami Valley we have identified

¹ Institutes, 4.1.9.

² Office of the General Assembly, “Stated Clerk Releases PC(USA) 2012 Statistics,” accessed February 4, 2014, <http://www.pcusa.org/news/2013/5/30/stated-clerk-releases-pcusa-2012-statistics/>.

at least twenty of our fifty seven congregations that we consider to be in crisis. Many of these congregations were once vibrant and thriving worshiping communities that have fallen on hard times in recent years. Living in such an environment cannot help but be a major source not only of anxiety but outright frustration, especially for those of us in leadership positions in the church. What is the problem and how can we stem the tide of church decline before the church ceases to be? Or for those of us of a slightly more ambitious nature, how might we turn things around and get the church growing again?

Many answers could and have been given to these questions. Myriads of church growth strategies and programs have been put forth over the years, more often than not to no avail. Too often we end up looking for solutions in all the wrong places, turning to some shiny new program or seeking to reinvent the church so that it appears more relevant to contemporary eyes. The truth is there is no one size fits all solution to the problem but there are certain commonalities that are shared across the church, regardless of congregational size or theological tradition. Perhaps chief among those commonalities is the efficacy of strong preaching. Too many small congregations make the mistake of trying to be something they are not and forgetting their central reason for being. Not every church is a mega-church but every church shares the same mission.

As William Willimon and Bob Wilson wrote many years ago, “There may be small churches without a building, without an educational program, without a budget, and without formal organizational structure, but there are no small churches without preaching and worship.”³ As Willimon and Wilson further point out, “the primary

³William H. Willimon and Robert L. Wilson, *Preaching and Worship in the Small Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1980), 26.

ministry of God's church, from which all other ministries are derived, is the ministry of Word and Sacrament-the proclamation, prayer, and praise of the Lord who calls us together and sends us forth."⁴

One fact that we have too often forgotten is that the church exists for one reason only and that is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Preaching is not just something that preachers do. Preaching is something the church does. As Tom Long has said, "God calls the whole church to proclaim the gospel, and every disciple of Jesus Christ is a part of this calling. The whole church proclaims the gospel, and the preaching of sermons is but one part of this larger ministry."⁵ In fact, the purpose of preaching is to enable the Word of God to be heard by the congregation such that the congregation is enabled to go into the world as a herald of the gospel. According to Long, "The purpose of preaching is not to provide a forum for the preacher-giving moral advice, expressing opinions on important topics, or listing religious 'principles of living' - but rather to be the occasion for the hearing of a voice beyond the preacher's voice-the very word of the living God."⁶

We have all heard more than our share of boring preacher jokes. Like the one where a man fell asleep on his wife's shoulder during the sermon. The preacher said to the wife, "Wake him up!" To which the wife responded, "You put him to sleep. You wake him up." It is a truism that for a joke to be funny it has to be based in some part on reality. And the reality is that many a parishioner has been put to sleep by the minister's sermon on Sunday morning and that isn't all because church people don't get enough

⁴Willimon and Wilson, *Preaching and Worship in the Small Church* 27.

⁵Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 12.

⁶*Ibid.*, 25.

sleep at home. Why is it that so many sermons are so very boring? Many reasons could be given but the primary reason is that we tend to labor under some misconceptions with regard to the true nature of preaching and its purpose.

One of those misconceptions is that the purpose of a sermon is to convey information. This is not altogether wrong. Certainly if the preacher begins with a biblical text the sermon should seek to explain the text such that the hearers get some sense of the biblical writer's intent. Hopefully the preacher has done enough exegetical work to be able to bring out elements and nuances which are not obviously apparent from a cursory reading of the text. However, it is too often the case that the preacher takes the congregation into the world of the text and leaves them there. As Harry Emerson Fosdick famously quipped, "Only the preacher proceeds still upon the idea that folk come to church desperately anxious to discover what happened to the Jebusites."⁷

Of course it is my opinion that Fosdick himself missed the point with his analysis for his conclusion was that a sermon should seek relevance by primarily addressing a felt need of the congregation. Not that addressing the needs of people is a bad thing but a sermon should always be a word from God and, as such, God and not human beings should always be the subject. At least that was Karl Barth's contention. According to Barth, "All the action that takes place in preaching... is the action of the divine Subject. Revelation is a closed circuit in which God is both Subject and Object and the link between the two."⁸ There is a difference between a sermon and a Bible study or at least there should be. Church people, whether or not they are aware of it, do not come to

⁷Harry Emerson Fosdick, "What Is the Matter With Preaching?," in *What's the Matter With Preaching Today?*, ed. Mike Graves (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 10.

⁸Mike Graves, "God of Grace and Glory," in *What's the Matter With Preaching Today?*, ed. Mike Graves (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 113.

church to gain some interesting new knowledge about the Bible or to hear the preacher's opinions about how to solve their personal problems. They come to church to hear a word from God. They will stay awake for that.

One reason for the relative impotence of the mainline protestant pulpit could be that preaching has tended to be more cerebral than experiential. At the risk of promoting a racial stereotype, we could probably all learn a great deal from the African American preaching tradition. Not all black preachers are good preachers but some of the best preachers in the church are black preachers. There is a reason for that. Black preaching, at its best, is not so much about conveying information from the text as it is about helping the congregation to experience the text. The skillful black preacher knows how to move seamlessly between the world of the text and the contemporary world in such a way as to make the hearers feel as if they are eye witnesses and not just passive recipients of biblical information. As Henry Mitchell points out, "Black congregations do not ask what is a preacher's personal opinion (sic). They want to know what *God* has said through the preacher's encounter with the Word."⁹ One reason the African American pulpit tends to be so powerful is that from its earliest days the Black church has shown a healthy respect for the authority of the Bible. "The Bible filled the void once occupied by an awesomely authoritative oral tradition."¹⁰

This is not to suggest that black preachers are fundamentalists or Bibliolaters but that black preaching properly understood seeks to let the Bible speak for itself so that the preacher speaks not his or her own words but delivers to the people a Word from God. This Word is more narrative than propositional in its nature. Black Christians learned

⁹Henry Mitchell. *Black Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990), 56.

¹⁰Ibid., 57.

very early on the perils of a proof texting interpretive model. To the extent that African slaves were even allowed to convert to Christianity their masters were very careful to control the kinds of sermons they were allowed to hear. One of the favorite texts of the white preachers who preached to the slaves was Ephesians 6:5-9, specifically verse five which reads, “Servants, be obedient to them that are your master according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ (KJV).”¹¹ According to Albert Raboteau, “Slaves frequently were moved to hold their own religious meetings out of disgust for the vitiated Gospel preached by their masters’ preachers. Sermons urging slaves to be obedient and docile were repeated ad nauseam.”¹²

This last point may help to explain why education has always been held to such a high level of importance in the black church. “Slaves were distrustful of the white folks’ interpretation of the Scriptures and wanted to be able to search them for themselves. The reverence which they held for the Bible moved many ex-slaves to flock to schools set up by missionaries after freedom came.”¹³ But even before they were educated black preachers had a particular, almost intuitive, talent for both remembering scriptural passages and bringing them to life for their hearers. As Raboteau points out, “Illiteracy proved less of an obstacle to knowledge of the Bible than might be thought, for biblical stories became part of the oral tradition of the slaves. Oral instructions and Sunday School lessons were committed to memory.”¹⁴

¹¹Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1978), 151-152.

¹²Ibid., 213.

¹³Ibid., 240.

¹⁴Ibid., 241.

The ability to internalize scripture as received oral tradition rather than taking a propositional or law book hermeneutical approach led to a narrative theological approach to both biblical interpretation and preaching. Black preachers were narrative theologians long before narrative theology became all the rage in the mainline seminaries. According to Warren Stewart, black theology revolves around the idea of God as liberator. “No other point in black theology has been so central to all of its noted advocates. To be sure, the idea of God as a liberator can be traced most notably to Moses and the Hebrew children in the Exodus event...the oppressed black community found strength in knowing that God had been actively involved in the liberation of the Hebrew children. Thus, more than likely, God would take an active part in the liberation of black people from their oppression.”¹⁵

Anyone who has spent very much time worshipping among African American Christians will immediately note that worship in the Black church tends to be much more spirited and heartfelt than is worship for the typical all white Presbyterian congregation. The reason may have more to do with homiletic understandings than with racial or cultural differences. The skillful black preacher understands that a sermon should engage not only the hearer’s mind but the hearer’s entire being. It should be experienced and not just heard. According to Henry Mitchell, “The preacher’s task is to provide a *total experience* of the gospel. This is set over against an exclusively cognitive or intellectual grasp of divine truth. The experience-based gospel proposed here is to stimulate the growth of gut-level trust in God by providing vicarious involvements in the encounters

¹⁵Warren H. Stewart, Sr., *Interpreting God’s Word in Black Preaching* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1984), 17-18.

where faith has been caught and taught.”¹⁶ Mitchell echoes the sentiments of Fosdick when he says that “Lessons of history and maps of Paul’s journeys can be interesting and enlightening in classes, but not in a sermon, except as setting. The gospel was made for salvation and spiritual growth, not to create experts on Palestine.”¹⁷ Mitchell sums it up very nicely when he says, “Preaching is art, not argument. Spiritual encounters are not legislated or decreed; they are *experienced*.”¹⁸

This is not to suggest that all mainline protestant preachers are boring but a good many of them are and that is a problem for the church. While a dynamic pulpit may not guarantee that a church will grow and thrive, a dull and lifeless pulpit will almost certainly guarantee that it will not. This is especially true for small congregations. A large church can survive for a very long time on dazzling programs but small membership churches generally lack the resources and the sheer manpower for program driven ministry. Powerful preaching, on the other hand, is not limited exclusively to the mega-church pulpit. Few things can kill a small membership church faster than dull preaching. As Fred Craddock points out, “Boredom is not just a condition that prompts humorous stories about this stale professor or that dull preacher. Boredom is a form of evil; perhaps one of Kierkegaard’s characters was more correct when he said, ‘Boredom is the root of all evil.’ Boredom is a preview of death, if not itself a form of death, and when trapped in

¹⁶Henry H. Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching: Revised Edition* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 121.

¹⁷Ibid., 17.

¹⁸Ibid., 15.

prolonged boredom, even the most saintly of us will hope for, pray for, or even engineer relief, however demonic.”¹⁹

Craddock’s point is that if we are really serious about proclaiming the Gospel we owe it to our listeners to put no small amount of thought into how to be more effective communicators. “I am speaking not simply as one who wishes to be a more effective communicator; I have another field of endeavor in which I work daily: listening. This is by far the more difficult, and I hope it is not pure unadulterated selfishness on my part to wish that those communicating to me would give more attention to how, to method, to style. Some listeners in churches have accepted boredom as one of the crosses that come with the commitment, but I cannot.”²⁰ Certainly we preachers could stand to put more effort into learning effective communication skills and there is no doubt that the mainline seminary curriculums should be more heavily weighted toward actually teaching students how to preach. Homileticians have long lamented the fact that one can obtain a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited seminary without taking even one course in Homiletics, but that is not the only reason so many of our pulpits are dull and boring.

The problem with too many pulpits is not so much the *how* but the *what*. While we could all stand to improve our sermon crafting and our sermon delivery skills it would seem a larger problem has to do with content. At least since the rise of modernity the protestant mainline especially has been plagued by a kind of individualistic and personalistic model of preaching whereby preaching of the *basileia tou theou* is replaced with psychotherapy or trite moralism on the one hand or personal salvation in the afterlife

¹⁹Fred Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002), 6.

²⁰*Ibid.*

on the other. As David Buttrick has written, “The model of revelation put forth by twentieth-century theology tipped Christian faith into the arms of an emerging psychological personalism, what Philip Rieff once labeled ‘the triumph of the therapeutic.’”²¹ Buttrick continues, “The pulpit in America has largely been captured by the triumph of the therapeutic. We have psychological explanation as a substitute for transcendent meaning, and psychological development, stage by stage, as a substitute for the soul’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*.²² Sorry, but people don’t need to come to church for that.

Tom Long gives a good example of this kind of therapeutic preaching in the following excerpt:

Unresolved grief is the greatest weight on the Christian life. We get stuck somewhere in the stages of grief and cannot move through to acceptance of the facts of death and finally to peace. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, ‘Blessed are those who mourn,’ as if to say, ‘Congratulations to those who can grieve and work through their sadness, work through the anger, work through the loss. These are the blessed ones who can find God’s true acceptance and peace.’²³

Long makes the point that such a sermon on its face seems perfectly acceptable. The preacher quotes the Bible, makes reference to God and offers helpful advice on how to deal with grief but misses the whole point of the text. When Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount he did not come as a nice pastoral counselor with soothing words of therapy for the grief stricken. His point was to announce the coming of the Kingdom of God and proclaim that in him the causes of mourning and suffering, the powers that be in this world, had been defeated. As Long points out, “Christian preaching can claim to be

²¹Buttrick, *Preaching the New and the Now*, 13.

²²*Ibid.*, 38.

²³Thomas G. Long, “No News is Bad News,” in *What’s the Matter With Preaching Today?*, ed. Mike Graves (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 152.

gospel proclamation only if everything that is said rests on the Easter cry, ‘Something has happened! God has done something, is doing something, will do something world-shaking in our midst.’ The good news is, after all, *news*.²⁴

Closely related to the therapeutic model is a kind of preaching, particularly pervasive in liberal mainline denominations like the PCUSA, whereby preachers have become captive to a particular political ideology and substitute the preaching of the gospel for political talking points. Put bluntly, a good many of our preachers do not seem to be able to tell the difference between the gospel of Jesus Christ and the party platform of the Democratic National Committee. It’s almost as if we’ve given up on the power of the Holy Spirit to effect transformation and have vested our last best hope in secular politics. If we are not offering people anything they cannot get anywhere else then we have no one to blame but ourselves when our congregations shrivel up and die. In other words, why should anyone go to the trouble of going to church on Sunday morning when they can stay home and hear the same thing on “Meet the Press?”

Walter Brueggemann is right when he suggests that what is needed is more poetic speech, which is not to say that we need to speak in rhyme and meter but that poetic speech seeks to construe reality in more imaginative ways than just what can be determined through empirical observation. Modernity dealt in prose, not poetry. Says Brueggeman, “If our technical reason does not pervert the truth of the gospel in relative naivete, our unwitting embrace of social ideology distorts the news so that it can be accommodated to a variety of social ideologies, of the right and of the left. . . . When we embrace ideology uncritically, it is assumed that the Bible squares easily with capitalist

²⁴Long, “No News is Bad News,” 156.

ideology, or narcissistic psychology, or revolutionary politics, or conformist morality, or romantic liberalism.”²⁵

According to Brueggemann, one of the key problems that poetic speech addresses is the problem of reductionism, the all too human tendency to want to reduce the infinite to the finite and worship the creation rather than the creator. We would all like to reduce the mystery of God to a manageable formula and seek meaning in the material but the gospel defies such inclinations at every turn. To quote Brueggemann again, “Poetic speech is the only proclamation worth doing in a situation of reductionism, the only proclamation, I submit, that is worthy of the name *preaching*. Such preaching is not moral instruction or problem solving or doctrinal clarification. It is not good advice, nor is it romantic caressing, nor is it a soothing good humor. It is, rather, the ready, steady, surprising proposal that the real world in which God invites us to live is not the one made available by the rulers of this age.”²⁶

Now lest there be any misunderstanding this is not to say that preaching should never be political. Church people are famous for insisting that politics do not belong in the pulpit. This is especially true when the sermon conflicts with someone’s own pet partisan sensibilities. The truth is that the Word of God is always a challenge to earthly political realities. From Moses to the Hebrew prophets to Jesus himself, the Bible is filled with characters whose stock in trade was speaking truth to power. The preaching of the gospel is not just (at least it shouldn’t be) a message of personal salvation in the sweet by and by but rather an announcement of a whole new social order in Jesus Christ. Gospel

²⁵Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), 2.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 3.

preaching lifts up a story about a people formed together by the Holy Spirit of God to be something brand new in the midst of the old order of things. As John Howard Yoder has said, “That story is about a people, a civil reordering in their very existence, not only potentially or by implication. No ‘bridge’ or ‘translation’ is needed to make the Bible a book about politics. The new order, the new humanity, does not replace or destroy the old, but that does not make the new order apolitical. Its very existence is subversive at the points where the old order is without vision.”²⁷ Preaching that gives people such a vision cannot help but be political but the gospel is its own brand of politics, a third way if you will. The problem is that preaching can too easily slide into partisan politics.

Far too often sermons become nothing more than political party talking points with a little Jesus language thrown in to make it sound churchy. The trouble with such preaching is that it assumes the church exists to underwrite American style democracy and fails to understand that America is emphatically *not* the Kingdom of God. As Stanley Hauerwas puts it, “We live in a mad existence where some people kill other people for abstract and unworthy entities called nations. The church’s first task is not to make the nation-state work, but rather to remind us that the nation, especially as we know it today, is not an ontological necessity for human living. The church, as an international society, is a sign that God, not nations, rule this world.”²⁸ Preaching that calls people to live into the Kingdom of God and reject the principalities and powers of this world will serve as a natural corrective to heresy that is American civil religion.

²⁷John Howard Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Pulic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 84.

²⁸Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1981), 109.

Of course, preaching that focuses on the social and corporate nature of the gospel to the exclusion of personal experience is also one sided and incomplete. It does no good to preach on the Kingdom unless the listeners know themselves to be citizens of that Kingdom. To deny the personal aspect of Christian faith is to deny the power of the Holy Spirit to effect transformation in the lives of individual believers. “Many of us can give testimony to the miracle of Christ in our own personal lives. So we cannot, indeed must not, deny the saving grace we experience inwardly and individually. Jesus Christ *is* a personal savior. *But if all we can do is hawk a personal savior in our preaching, then we deny the Scriptures and tumble toward outright heresy.* The Christian Scriptures clearly proclaim a Christ who is savior of the world and not merely a personal therapist for troubled souls. The issue is christological; it has to do with the status of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”²⁹ What we believe about Jesus makes all the difference in the world.

In Matthew chapter 16:13-20 we read about the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi. After having asked the disciples who people say the Son of Man is Jesus asks them who they say he is. “Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven (Matthew 16:16, 17 ESV).” Only in the power of the Holy Spirit can anyone confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. According to Colin Williams, John Wesley believed “[The Holy Spirit’s] main task is to help us to receive Christ as lord and to reveal to us the truth concerning Christ. None can believe in Christ, except by the ‘experimental assurance’ given by the

²⁹David Buttrick, *Preaching Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988), 48.

Holy Spirit, and this assurance is made available to us as the Spirit illumines our hearts when we read the Scripture and hear the word preached.”³⁰ Here is where holiness preaching comes into the picture. Holiness preaching seeks to open the hearers to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit such that they are enabled to confess Jesus as Lord and receive an assurance of grace in the present.

Wesley is helpful here in that he stressed an assurance of salvation in the present. Wesley’s doctrine of assurance was a break from both the Catholic and the Reformation traditions in that, “Whereas they thought of assurance as the assurance of salvation, and for that reason were very careful to guard against presumption, Wesley rejected the doctrine of predestination which lay behind their assumption, and therefore insisted that assurance relates not to final salvation, but to present salvation from which it is possible to fall. Wesley cut the knot of present hesitation and future presumption by his teaching that we can have the assurance of present salvation, while waiting in hope for our final salvation.”³¹ Now certainly those in the Presbyterian tradition who are fully committed to Calvin’s doctrines of double predestination and perseverance will be uneasy at the suggestion that one might fall from grace but the reality is that most modern day Presbyterians are even more uneasy with Calvin’s double decree. The idea that God would predestine some to everlasting life and others to everlasting death before the foundation of the world is something they cannot accept even if it is in the Westminster Confession.³²

³⁰Colin W. Williamson, *John Wesley’s Theology Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1960), 98.

³¹*Ibid.*, 123.

³²The Office of the General Assembly, *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Part I Book of Confessions* (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly), 6.016 Pg. 125.

That really is not the point anyway as far as the current discussion is concerned. The idea is not for the preacher to threaten people with the negative specter of losing salvation but to encourage and inspire them by offering them a fresh assurance of grace. Here again, we can learn a thing or two from the African American preaching tradition. Frank Thomas has offered the following formal definition of African American preaching: “The nature and purpose of African American preaching is to help people *experience the assurance of grace* (the good news) that is the gospel of Jesus the Christ. It is this assurance of grace, received through African American preaching and worship that has historically sustained, encouraged, and liberated African American people.”³³ Henry Mitchell’s definition is similar. “*To preach is so to be used by the Holy Spirit that the gospel is communicated, to the end that hearers are saved and then helped to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord. It is the hope of every preacher that every sermon will be used by the Spirit to move Christians to grow from point A to point B, in the direction of the life modeled by Jesus Christ. And every sermon should focus on such behavioral goal as stated or implied by the biblical text.*”³⁴ Both Thomas and Mitchell agree that every sermon should end in celebration.

Thomas borrows from James Dunn in describing the church as “The Charismatic Community.”³⁵ According to Thomas, “The Greek word for grace is *charis*, with the root being *char* (pronounced *kyar*). The Greek word for joy is *chara*; rejoicing is *chario*; thanks is *eucharistia*; and gift is *charisma*. All these are rooted in *char*, all rooted in

³³Frank A. Thomas, *They Like to Never Quit Praisin’ God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1997), 3.

³⁴Henry Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*, 13.

³⁵Thomas, *They Like to Never Quit Praisin’ God*, 26.

God's grace."³⁶ "The cornerstone of Christian living is grace: God met human beings in a condition of sin and oppression with good news and offered salvation. The Holy Spirit, through prompting and revelation, helps people to 'see' and experience Jesus Christ as savior. There cannot be an experience of Christ as savior without an experience of the Holy Spirit. As James Dunn, who coined the term 'charismatic community,' has observed, the experience of the Spirit is the other side of the coin from faith in Christ (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 1:21ff).³⁷ The goal of this project is the formation of such a charismatic community.

³⁶Thomas, *They Like to Never Quit Praising God*, 25.

³⁷Ibid., 26.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The focus of this peer group is prophetic preaching and praxis. The question that springs immediately to mind upon hearing that a group is studying prophetic preaching and praxis is, what is prophetic preaching and how does it differ from any other kind of preaching? Indeed, it could rightly be said that there is no other kind of preaching. For preaching, properly understood, is a speaking forth of the Word of God which is the very essence of prophecy. Prophecy itself, as the writers of *Exploring the Old Testament* would have it, amounts to the speaking forth of a word from another: “The term prophet is derived from a Greek word *prophetes*, which means ‘one who speaks on behalf of another.’ . . . the modern concept of a prophet as ‘one who predicts’ or ‘forecasts the future’ is based upon the fact that the ancient prophet did occasionally predict future events through divine inspiration. But this represented only one aspect of his ministry. *Forthtelling*, rather than *foretelling*, was his primary function.”¹

Speaking as one who is a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), it should be pointed out that from a Reformed theological perspective, as it pertains to Christian preaching this speaking forth of the word of another is a speaking forth of the Word of God.

¹ W.T. Purkiser, ed., *Exploring the Old Testament* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1955), 287-88.

Or, in the words of the Second Helvetic Confession,

THE PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD IS THE WORD OF GOD. Wherefore when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is proclaimed, and received by the faithful; and that neither any other Word of God is to be invented nor is to be expected from heaven: and that now the Word itself which is preached is to be regarded, not the minister that preaches; for even if he be evil and a sinner, nevertheless the Word of God remains still true and good.²

Karl Barth even went so far as to suggest that the very heart of Protestantism is the sermon as the exposition of Scripture. Said Barth:

It is simply a truism that there is nothing more important, more urgent, more helpful, more redemptive, and more salutary, there is nothing, from the viewpoint of heaven or earth, more relevant to the real situation than the speaking and the hearing of the *Word* of God in the originative and regulative power of its truth, in its all-eradicating and all-reconciling earnestness, in the light that it casts not only upon *time* and time's confusions but also beyond, toward the brightness of *eternity*, revealing time and eternity *through* each other and *in* each other – the Word, the Logos, of the living God.³

Please notice, however, one very important point. According to the Second Helvetic Confession, when preachers preach the Word of God in the church the Word of God is proclaimed *and received* by the faithful (italics added). That is where the second part of the peer group focus, praxis, comes into play.

What exactly is praxis anyway? According to the Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology:

Praxis, or practice, is a pattern of activity or behavior such as the exercise of a profession, occupation or skill. When it is spelt 'praxis' the emphasis is usually on social and political activity

² *The Book of Confessions*, 5.004, 53.

³ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith Publishing, 1978), 123-24.

which is innovative and directed towards a transformation of the socio-economic system...At the heart of Christian praxis is worship, the encounter with God which illumines, signifies and sustains the whole pattern of Christian praxis. Only those who follow may know Jesus, and the praxis of loving God necessarily encompasses, and issues, in, loving one's fellows, and being concerned for the conditions of their life.⁴

So then, praxis (at least from a Christian standpoint) refers to that set of habits and practices that are formed and informed by ones membership and participation in a worshipping community. At the heart of said worshipping community is the preaching of the Word of God.

The thrust of this particular project is the formation of a worshipping community of Presbyterians whose praxis is centered in the preaching of the Word of God under the guidance of the historic confessional standards of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). More specifically, there will be a focus on recovery of the Calvinist and Reformed doctrine of sanctification. That is, how do we hear the biblical call to be God's holy people and how might a community of "Pentecostal Presbyterians" respond to that call in a context in which the very word "sanctification" has been all but deleted from the lexicon?

A daunting task to be sure but one worthy of undertaking in an age in which the survival of many mainline congregations and, in some cases, entire denominations is in serious jeopardy. Indeed, what is at stake is not only the renewal of the church but the very salvation of the world. A bold statement if there ever was one but if the prophetic Word of God is to have any power at all that power will be experienced as the Word takes root and grows within the people of God called the church. What the world needs is

⁴ Alan Richardson and John Bowden, ed., *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1983), 457.

not better politicians (although it would be nice to see one of those once in a while) or more benevolent governments or even more effective social programs. All of those things may serve to ease the symptoms of what ails us but what the world really needs is a better church, one that takes seriously the call to go forth in the power of the Holy Spirit and be the holy people of God. To that task we now turn.

At first blush the term “Pentecostal Presbyterians” seems rather oxymoronic. Pentecostalism in the modern era has come to be characterized in most people’s minds by exuberant worship and the display of various charismatic gifts, tongues speaking being chief among them. In fact, ever since the Azusa Street revival in 1906 there have been many Pentecostal groups who insist on tongues speaking as evidence of the baptism of the Spirit.⁵ To be sure, such things have never been hallmarks of the Presbyterian tradition, especially the exuberant worship part. The question though is, what did the term “Pentecostal” mean before Azusa Street and how might such an earlier understanding be rightly applied to Presbyterians living in the twenty first century?

Christian groups have been wearing the title “Pentecostal” at least since the American holiness movement in the nineteenth century. One of the largest modern denominations to have taken on that title for example is the Church of the Nazarene, which was originally called the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene. The Nazarenes dropped “Pentecostal” from their name in 1919 so as to distance themselves from those who insisted on charismata like tongues speaking as evidence of salvation and/or the baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁶ As Edwin Gaustad points out, “in early years the Holiness

⁵ James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 195.

⁶ Mead, *Handbook of Denominations*, 248.

and the Pentecostal movements were closely associated, the two gradually drew apart, the former concerned much more with a steady development of the Christian life, the latter more with the sudden manifestations of the Spirit's presence and power.⁷ It is this emphasis on steady development that we are referring to with the term, "Pentecostal Presbyterians."

Though some credit John Wesley and his doctrine of Christian Perfection⁸ as being somewhat the father of the holiness movement he was certainly not the first to emphasize sanctification as an integral part of the Christian life. The raw (and in some cases not so raw) materials are found throughout the scriptures and can be traced back at least to the Apostle Paul (see for example 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8). "Christian Perfection" is a rather unfortunate term in that it suggests to many that what Wesley was after was perfect performance when, in actual fact, what he was referring to was complete devotion. "At times, Wesley did speak of perfection in terms of perfect acts or an achieved pattern of life. But when he did, he usually denied, as did Calvin, that perfection is a possibility for the Christian. Usually, Wesley referred to singular devotion to Christ as the essence of perfection."⁹ It is important to note at this juncture that although Calvin did deny the possibility of perfection in this life he did have a fully developed doctrine of sanctification.

The Calvinist doctrine of sanctification as expressed in scripture and the historic confessional standards of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as well as the writings of

⁷ Edwin Scott Gaustad, *A Religious History of America* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1990), 248.

⁸ John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity Interpreted Through Its Development* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing, 1988), 117-18.

⁹ Ibid.

theologians in the reformed tradition will be a prominent theme throughout this project and for good reason. If one travels for very long in Presbyterian circles it becomes quickly and appallingly apparent that the many Presbyterians have never even heard the word “sanctification” much less know what it means. That is a shame since the Presbyterian Church has much to say on the subject, at least on paper. If one does much more than a cursory survey of Calvin and his theological offspring it becomes fairly obvious that sanctification was a prominent feature of the Calvinist reformation from the very beginning. In fact, John Wesley himself was a Calvinist whose primary disagreement with Calvin was over the issues of predestination and human free will.¹⁰ Unfortunately it seems that Presbyterians, at least in the modern era, have focused on forgiveness of sins almost to the exclusion of any understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit for Christ-like living.

Of course, Presbyterians are by no means a monolithic group. Presbyterian congregations run the gamut from the very evangelical on the one end of the spectrum to those we could identify as liberal mainline congregations on the other. On the evangelical end of the spectrum are those congregations that Jason Vickers would refer to as communities of the already saved. In such an environment salvation is reduced to a personal relationship between Jesus and individual believers. Salvation is something that is easily obtained and can take place anywhere individuals are willing to ask for forgiveness. Membership and participation in the sacramental life of the church is understood as incidental to Christian faith. Says Vickers, “On this account of salvation, ‘being saved’ or converted is equated more or less with justification or being justified.

¹⁰ Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity, Volume 2* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1985), 213.

Regeneration and sanctification are often nowhere in sight. In other words, we have here a severely truncated view of salvation.”¹¹

Those on the other end, the liberal mainline congregations, tend to be what Vickers refers to as communities of radical inclusiveness. These congregations tend to stress the truism that God, in Jesus Christ, accepts everyone as they are. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be much thought given to the question of whether or not God expects people to stay as they are. Rather than stress the old marks of the church, the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, so-called progressive Christians prefer to stress the new marks which are inclusivity, openness, tolerance and diversity.¹² According to Vickers, when the new marks are compared with the old marks they are clearly deficient: “On the one hand, inclusivity, diversity, tolerance, and openness capture important aspects of oneness and catholicity. Indeed, the new marks make it clear that all people are welcome in the church. However, the new marks fail to remind people of the healing power of the church. Thus we can only too easily take the new marks to suggest that people should come as they are and remain as they are. The new marks simply do not capture all that the Holy Spirit makes available to us in the church through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.”¹³

NJPC lies somewhere between these two poles though somewhat closer to the former than the latter. Although the purpose of this section is to explore the biblical foundation it would seem helpful to at least unpack a bit of theological meaning before

¹¹ Jason Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground: A Theology for Church Renewal* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 79.

¹²Ibid., 85-86.

¹³Ibid., 90.

diving into an exegetical treatment of specific texts. According to Shirley Guthrie, “The verb ‘to sanctify’ means ‘to make holy.’ Growth in sanctification is growth in holiness. Christians are by definition holy people. That means that they are ‘saints,’ for that is the translation of the New Testament word for ‘holy ones.’”¹⁴ A slightly more nuanced definition follows from the work of John Webster:

The sanctification of the Christian is the work of the Holy Trinity in which the reconciled sinner is renewed for the active life of holy fellowship with God. Grounded in the electing, reconciling and perfecting work of Father, Son and Spirit, the active life of holy fellowship is the work of faith, which is at every moment characterized by mortification and vivification, and which is actual as freedom, obedience and love.¹⁵

And finally, as the doctrine of sanctification pertains to the New Testament, Wolfhart Pannenberg is particularly helpful: “According to the NT message the holiness that invades the world is mediated by Jesus Christ. It is also the work of the Spirit (1 Thess. 4:7-8; cf. 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2), who is called the Holy Spirit because he is the Spirit of the holy God. We also see the structure of the true Infinite in the life of the Spirit. As the Spirit who is identical with the divine essence (John 4:24) he is opposed to the world (Isa. 31:3), but he is also at work in creation as the origin of all life, and he sanctifies creatures by giving them a fellowship with the eternal God that transcends their transitory life.”¹⁶ It is this last part, “fellowship” that will be of particular concern to us going forward. One of the central themes of this project is that the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification is not concerned so much with the holiness of disconnected individuals

¹⁴ Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*

¹⁵ John Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 78.

¹⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 400.

as with the formation of a holy people (Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament) that is empowered to reflect the divine image and model that image to the world.

Following on that thought is one of the central tenets of the Reformation, namely, the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers,¹⁷ a theme which will be prominent throughout the course of this project. The assertion here is not that each individual believer is a priest but that God has called together a people that will serve a priestly function. That is, the people of God (Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament) are the vehicle through which God will affect the salvation of the world. A tall order for a ragtag collection of sinners and, in fact, an impossible task if not undertaken in the power of the Holy Spirit. With that in mind, we now turn to an exploration of a few key biblical texts in an effort to shine some scriptural light on what is meant by the term, "Pentecostal Presbyterians."

Biblical Foundation

Exodus 19:1-8

TRANSLATION: ¹ In the third month after the people of Israel came out of Egypt, on the day they entered the wilderness of Sinai- ²they had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness. Israel camped there before the mountain. ³Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴You have seen how I dealt with the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to

¹⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Book 4, Chapter 19, Paragraph 28). 2 vols. Edited by John T. McNeill. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960. Note: All references to this work will hereinafter be noted as, e.g. Institutes 4.19.28.

myself. ⁵And now, if you will listen to my voice and obey my covenant you will be my special possession among all the nations, for all the earth is mine; ⁶You shall be to me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.” ⁷So Moses returned and summoned the elders of the people, committing to them all these words which God had commanded him. ⁸All the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord.

According to the Exodus story the people of Israel had been wandering in the wilderness for three months after having been set free from slavery in Egypt. On the very day of the third new moon they arrive back where it all began, Mount Sinai. It was there that Moses first heard the voice of the Lord calling to him from inside a burning bush (Exodus 3) and received his commission to be the Lord’s agent in delivering Israel from its oppression. It was there that Moses was told to take off his sandals because the ground on which he was standing was *qodesh* (holy). This is the same word that is used in 19:6 when the people are told that they will be a holy people. The Septuagint in both instances employs the Greek word *hagios* which is variously translated as holy or sacred. In the New Testament that word is used to describe the saints (the holy ones) as those who are set apart for God’s sacred purposes (see Romans 1:7).

The Hebrew word *qodesh* is derived from a root word which means “apart” or “separateness.”¹⁸ There was nothing inherently holy about the ground at Mount Sinai. The reason the ground was said to be holy was that it was associated with the activity of the God whose very nature is holiness. As Karl Barth has pointed out, “God is holy, and

¹⁸ H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1988), 187.

what is connected with Him is holy, because and in so far as God, even in disclosing and imparting Himself, also draws and establishes the boundary which separates man from Him and which man, therefore, may not cross. Holiness is the separation in which God is God and in which, as God He goes His own way even and precisely as He is ‘God with us.’”¹⁹ So then, the Israelites have arrived back at that holy place where Moses first encountered the Lord. Having arrived, Moses the prophet is now summoned to the top of the mountain where he will receive the words he is to impart to the people. This is the very essence of prophecy. From the very beginning of the adventure that is the Exodus Moses has spoken not his own words (true prophets never do) but the Word of the Lord which he has been commanded to speak.

The content of the message begins with a recitation of the prior acts of God. “You have seen how I dealt with the Egyptians” points out the fact that it is always God who makes the first move. Subsequent to this recitation this same theme will be repeated again and again as the law is handed down to Israel. Notice for example in the preamble to the Decalogue, Israel is reminded that “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:1-2 NRSV).” The Ten Commandments are not just dead laws to be blindly followed by disconnected individuals. They are given to reveal the character of the God who brought them out of slavery and oppression at a great price and now calls them together as a worshipping community living in a sense of deep gratitude for what has been done on their behalf. Exodus 19:3-6 accomplishes much the same thing.

¹⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: Volume 1, The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936), 322.

The recitation of how God thwarted the Egyptians, carried them on eagles' wings and brought them to Himself is, as Hauerwas and Willimon have said, "A not-so-gentle way of reminding Israel, 'I paid dearly for you. You have been brought out of slavery, not in order to be free from all attachments, but rather in order that you might more fully belong to me, that you might worship me.'"²⁰ This brings up a very important issue which will be foundational throughout this project. There is a great misconception (going back at least as far as the classic Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms²¹) with regard to the nature of law in the Hebrew Bible. Many people hold to a theological misunderstanding whereby the Old Testament is thought of as a book of law and the New Testament is thought of as a book of grace. This misunderstanding does grave violence to both the Old Testament and to the Jewish faith, portraying Jewish faith as a religion of legalism devoid of any element of grace. Nothing could be further from the truth. A more thoughtful reading of the text reveals the fact that the law is given within the context of the story of God's redemptive activity in the life of God's people.

Israel does not become God's people through law keeping. As they stand at the foot of Mount Sinai they are reminded that they have been God's people all along. Indeed, "all the earth is mine (v.5c)." As is true of Old Testament law in general, the Sinai covenant material in Exodus 19:1 through 24:18 gives particular emphasis to the marriage of law and narrative which gives the Old Testament law a distinctive character which transcends the level of mere dead law. "While law and narrative were no doubt passed down separately for years, the law has now been integrated into the story. The law

²⁰ Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *The Truth About God* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1999), 16.

²¹ John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1967), 68.

does not stand in independence from that story. It is not even presented as a single chapter within that story but is woven into the narrative throughout.²² Further, “Obedience to law is thus not seen as a response to the law as law; obedience is fundamentally a response to God and to all that God has done.”²³

Still, there is a sense in which obedience to the provisions of the covenant cements Israel’s standing as God’s “special possession” (v. 5a). The pronouncement of the covenant conditions in verse 5 is not to be seen as forced obedience but rather as an offer of a choice between obedience and disobedience in much the same way that they are asked to make a choice in Joshua 24:15 (“choose this day whom you will serve”). According to John Durham, “The image presented is that of the unique and exclusive possession, and that image is expanded by what appears to be an addition (“for to me belongs the whole earth”) to suggest the ‘crown jewel’ of a large collection, the masterwork, the one-of-a-kind piece.”²⁴

The next two images (priestly kingdom and holy nation) underscore the reason God called Israel to the mountain and offered this special covenant relationship. “Israel as a ‘kingdom of priests’ is Israel committed to the extension throughout the world of the ministry of Yahweh’s Presence...they are to be a people set apart, different from all other people by what they are and are becoming – a display-people, a showcase to the world of how being in covenant with Yahweh changes a people.”²⁵

²² Terence E. Fretheim, *Interpretation: Exodus* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1991), 201.

²³ *Ibid.*, 203.

²⁴ John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Exodus* (Waco, TX: Word Publishing, 1987), 262.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 263.

As it pertains to the church, this same theme of a priestly kingdom and holy people was reiterated in 1 Peter 2:4-12, translated as follows:

⁴As you come to Him, the living stone, rejected by men but chosen and precious in the sight of God, ⁵you yourselves, as living stones, are being built into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands written, "Behold! I am laying in Zion a cornerstone chosen and precious, and the one believing in Him will never be put to shame." ⁷This honor belongs to you who believe, but to unbelievers the stone the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone, ⁸a stone of stumbling and a rock to trip over. In disobeying the Word they stumble, as they were destined to do. ⁹But you yourselves are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, in order that you might proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy. ¹¹Beloved I urge you, as resident aliens, to abstain from worldly passions which wage war against your soul; ¹² and conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they speak against you as evildoers they may observe your good works and glorify God on the day of visitation.

I have chosen to translate the παρακαλῶ ὡς παροίκους in verse eleven as “resident aliens” for a reason. The Greek can be read in a variety of ways, probably the most literal reading being “exiles and refugees” or perhaps, “strangers and temporary residents.” The term “resident aliens” seems to most accurately capture the force of what 1 Peter is trying to convey, at least in terms of modern imagery. Just as a citizen of, for example South Korea, might live in the United States as a resident alien so Peter applies the same imagery to Gentile Christians living in Asia Minor in his time. The language in verse eleven picks up on a term that was stated in 1:1, the παραπιδημοῦς, which refers to a person residing temporarily in a foreign place.²⁶ Specifically, the phrase used in the

²⁶ J. Ramsey Michaels, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter* (Waco, TX: Word Publishing, 1988), 7.

opening address is εκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδημοῖς διασποράς (“a chosen people, living as strangers in the diaspora”). According to Michaels:

The terms εκλεκτοῖ and παρεπιδημοῖ together sum up the recipients’ identity. These terms, nowhere else found in combination in biblical literature, appear on first impression to point in quite different directions. One expresses a relationship to God, the other a relationship to human society. One denotes a privileged group (before God), the other a disadvantaged group (in society). Yet the two expressions do not limit or qualify each other. The addressees are “strangers” because of (not despite) being chosen. Their divine election is a sociological as well as theological fact, for it has sundered them from their social world and made them like strangers or temporary residents in their respective cities and provinces. This is Peter’s assumption and the basis on which he writes.²⁷

The importance of this “resident aliens” metaphor cannot be overstated both in terms of understanding the message of 1 Peter as well as understanding the church’s way of being in contemporary society.

One of the central problems this project will seek to address is the over-secularization of the liberal mainline tradition in America, particularly the PCUSA. Whereas there once was a time in so-called “Christian America” when mainline Protestantism was the majority religion those days are have been behind us for generations. Many mainline Protestants have yet to get the memo on that. Once upon a time one could almost be a Christian by default in America. As Hauerwas and Willimon have pointed out, “Most of us who are white and over thirty were raised in a church where the main agenda of the church was to help Christians *adapt* to the world as it is.”²⁸ Back then it seemed the American church was in the world to underwrite the program of

²⁷ Michaels, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, 6.

²⁸ Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1989), 150.

American style liberal democracy and self-centered, individualistic materialism. Or, as Hauerwas and Willimon put it, “an accommodationist church, so intent on running errands for the world, is giving the world less and less in which to disbelieve. Atheism slips into the church where God really does not matter, as we go about building bigger and better congregations (church administration), confirming people’s self-esteem (worship), enabling people to adjust to their anxieties brought on by their materialism (pastoral care), and making Christ a worthy subject for poetic reflection (preaching).”²⁹

Of course, there never was any such thing as a “Christian America” or a Christian any other kind of secular nation state for that matter. The whole thing was one giant myth. The American church, liberal mainline and otherwise, if it is to survive at all will have to embrace the truth that being Christian today is no different than it was in the days of 1 Peter. These days you have to be Christian on purpose. That means the same thing today as it did back then. The Christian church is a subversive element in every society in which it takes up residence. Societies and cultures generally do not tolerate groups that try and subvert their way of life. Perhaps that explains why verse 12 says what it does about Christians living in such a way that even when the Gentiles speak evil of them they will see their good works and praise God. “We cannot know exactly what is involved in doing honorable (good) works and as a result being maligned for doing evil works (v.12). It could be simply explained as another case of misinterpreting every act and word of those who are hated or viewed with suspicion. Or perhaps we have a case of guilt by misidentification. There were many religious groups in Asia Minor, some of which were

²⁹Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 94.

politically subversive.”³⁰ Or, there is another possibility. “At the beginning of the second century, the governor of Bithynia and Pontus, when investigating ‘Christian clubs,’ found more who admitted to once having been Christian than he did those who were presently committed to the faith. And most likely, then as now, there were enough in the churches engaged in unacceptable behavior to bring down criticism on the entire assembly.”³¹

Living as resident aliens has never been easy, which is probably why 1 Peter reintroduces this idea only after reminding the people that they have been chosen and set apart by God.

The Protestant reformers, particularly Martin Luther appealed to this text, especially verse nine, to support the doctrine of the general priesthood of all believers. While such a reading may not be altogether wrong it tends to miss the central point of the text. 1 Peter is not concerned so much with the status of individual believers as it is with the status of the church as a holy people before God. The Calvinist will immediately notice the emphasis on election which seems to be a prominent theme throughout the letter while the priesthood idea only occurs here. According to John Elliott:

When the passage of 1 Peter is analyzed, on the other hand, within its own first-century literary and historical setting, it reveals a rather different meaning. In this original context it is *election* (of Jesus Christ and his community) rather than priesthood which is principally stressed. A priesthood theme, in fact, is nowhere mentioned in the rest of the letter, in contrast to the dominant theme of election. Moreover, this passage affirms not the *equality* of all believers as individual priests or kings but rather cites *collective terms* (generation, dwelling place, household, priestly community, nation, people) to emphasize the *community and divine favor* of the new covenant people of God. Thus, while Luther’s concern for the universal *ministry* of all the faithful and

³⁰ Fred Craddock, *Westminster Bible Companion: First and Second Peter and Jude* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 43.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

their equal status before God certainly has biblical roots elsewhere in the New Testament, it is clear that the authors of 1 Peter were dealing with different problems and responding with different emphases. Through faith in Jesus, the elect and holy Messiah of God, 1 Peter declares, people who were once estranged from God have become his elect and holy community, a family of the reborn in whom his Spirit dwells.³²

Just as the Israelites were called to the foot of Mt. Sinai and set apart as a priestly kingdom and a holy nation, so too has the church now been included in that same plan.

Of course, being called and actually living out a calling are two completely different things. It is one thing to know we are called to be God's people and a blessing to the nations. Actually living as the people of God and reflecting the divine image is another thing entirely. Neither Israel nor the church can merely will themselves to be God's holy people. Apart from the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit there is little difference between Israel, the church and any other random collection of individuals. The scriptures make it clear again and again that the call to covenant faithfulness is not some kind of mission impossible. God does not lay out covenant conditions and then leave the people to their own devices but rather provides the means whereby the conditions can be carried out, namely the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Many scriptural references could be provided to illustrate this point. For example, consider the following passage from Ezekiel 36:

Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when through you I display my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations, and

³² John H. Elliott, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: I-II Peter/Jude* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing, 1982), 84-85.

gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. (Ezekiel 36:22-28 NRSV)

John Calvin referenced the above passage (among others) in making the point that, in his words, “Men’s inability to do good manifests itself above all in the work of redemption, which God does quite alone.”³³ That is, human beings only carry out the will of God inasmuch as we have been empowered by God to do so. Said Calvin:

But since the whole of Scripture proclaims that faith is a free gift of God, it follows that when we, who are by nature inclined to evil with our whole heart, begin to will good, we do so out of mere grace. Therefore, the Lord when he lays down these two principles in the conversion of his people – that he will take from them their “heart of stone” and give them “a heart of flesh” [Ezek. 36:26] – openly testifies that what is of ourselves ought to be blotted out to convert us to righteousness; but that whatever takes its place is from him. And he does not declare this in one place only, for he says in Jeremiah: “I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me all their days” [Jer. 32:39]. A little later: “I will put the fear of my name in their heart, that they may not turn from me” [Jer. 32:40]. Again, in Ezekiel: “I will give them one heart and will give a new spirit in their inward parts. I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh” [Ezek. 11:19]. He testifies that our conversion is the creation of a new spirit and a new heart. What other fact could more clearly claim for him, and take away from us, every vestige of good and right in our will? For it always follows that nothing good can arise out of our will until it has been reformed; and after its reformation, in so far as it is good, it is so from God, not from ourselves.³⁴

³³ Institutes, 2.3.6.

³⁴ Institutes, 2.3.8.

While these passages were written to Israel and Judah in exile and not to believers generally, the same principle applies and Calvin's point is well taken. The exiles of Ezekiel's time had no hope of rescuing themselves or of restoring Jerusalem. If there was to be any restoration it would happen purely by the grace of God. Ezekiel underscored that point in the famous Valley of Dry Bones passage in chapter 37. Only God can give life to a valley of dry bones. Or, as Walter Brueggemann puts it, "Exile is not the last word; that is, death is not the last reality. Israel's situation is not hopeless, because God's transformative wind (spirit) blows even in the dismay of exile, in order to work a newness toward life."³⁵

For our purposes the key verses from Ezekiel 37 are verses 9 and 10:

Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, that they may live." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. (Ezekiel 37:9,10 NRSV)

The Hebrew word that is used for "breath" in these verses is *ruach* which can be translated "breath" or "wind" or "spirit."³⁶ This is the same word that is used in Genesis 1:2 to refer to "the Spirit of God" (NAB) which swept over the face of the waters at the dawn of creation. In both instances the Septuagint uses the Greek word πνευμα (pneuma). That same word comes into the New Testament, for example in Acts 2:4 as the πνευματος αγιου, or Holy Spirit.

The significance of this key word cannot be overstated in that, in each case, what is being referred to is not wind or spirit in any generic sense but the spirit of God. In both

³⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 22.

³⁶ William Gesenius (translated by Edward Robinson), *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 924.

Old and New Testaments it is always God the Holy Spirit who empowers the people of God to do that which they are unable to do in their own power. In Ezekiel's dry bones vision it was the Spirit of God who gave new life to Israel and sent them forth as a sign to the nations of God's sanctifying power. The prophet was promised that Israel would be restored and that, "My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations shall know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forevermore (Ezekiel 37:27,28 NRSV)."

This theme of God's continuing presence is picked up and expanded in Luke – Acts. In Luke 24 Jesus' disciples are still not sure what to make of the crucifixion and the resurrection appearances. The risen Christ has appeared to them, shown them his scars, shared a meal with them, and yet they still are not sure what to believe or how they should proceed. Then he makes the following promise:

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:44-49 NRSV)

In Acts 2 we find the disciples still waiting for the promise to be fulfilled. The picture we are given is of a fearful and timid group of Jesus' followers who were not altogether unlike those exiles back in Ezekiel's time. Things seemed rather hopeless and the future was unclear at best. But then, suddenly and unexpectedly, the wind began to blow. "Can it be the same wind which on the very first morning of all mornings swept across dark

waters, the wind of creation (Gen. 1)? The wind is once again bringing something to life.”³⁷ In fact, what is being brought to life is a new community of faith which is empowered by the Holy Spirit for proclamation.

As William Willimon has pointed out, it is important to note that proclamation was the first of the acts carried out by this fledgling church:

What was first heard is then seen-tongues like fire (2:3). It is not until verse four that we learn that this strange irruption is none other than the promised Holy Spirit. John the Baptist had said that the Christ, “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Luke 3:16). With playful ambiguity Luke expands these fiery “tongues” into the gift of “other tongues” that the Spirit miraculously enables the assembly to speak. The first gift of the Spirit is the gift of speech, the gift of speech in different languages. So we are hearing a story about the irruption of the Spirit into the community and the first fruit of the Spirit-the gift of proclamation.³⁸

We miss the point if we get bogged down in the details of the historicity of the story or spend too much effort trying to understand the mechanics of just how this miracle of speech took place. Luke was not so much concerned with such matters as he was with making this one central point. The Holy Spirit empowers the church to proclaim the gospel and the Holy Spirit facilitates both speaking and hearing.

It is important to point out that what took place in Acts 2 was a miracle of speech. This was not some heavenly language, not the *glossalalia* of 1 Corinthians 14 but a gift of human language. The key word in Acts 2:6 is *διαλεκτῶ*, from which we get our English word, “dialect.” The Apostles were not speaking in unknown tongues but were speaking in the languages of the people who were gathered outside the upper room.

³⁷ William Willimon, *Interpretation: Acts* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1988), 30.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

Willimon makes an important point in that, although many have seen this narrative as a reversal of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9) or a miracle of hearing rather than speaking, Luke probably did not have either of those ideas in mind. “The miracle here is one of proclamation. Those who had no 'tongue' to speak of the 'mighty works of God' now preach.”³⁹

So then, if prophecy amounts to the speaking forth of the word of another as was posited in the opening paragraphs of the Theoretical Foundation then I submit that what was given to the church at Pentecost was none other than the gift of prophecy. Indeed, the church exists for no other reason than to preach the gospel.⁴⁰ If the term “Pentecostal Presbyterians” does nothing else it should conjure an image of the people of God, endued and empowered by the Holy Spirit and sent into the world to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in both word and deed. That said, we now move on to explore the theological foundation of a Reformed doctrine of sanctification.

Theological Foundation

Saint Anselm of Canterbury famously defined theology as “faith seeking understanding.”⁴¹ Anselm’s definition is instructive in that it presupposes faith and then understanding. That is, we do not think our way to God but rather faith comes to us through the gift of God’s self-revelation and theology is our attempt to come to terms with that self-revelation. As Hans Kung has said, “The hidden God has the initiative: it is

³⁹ Willimon, *Interpretation: Acts*, 32.

⁴⁰ Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 160.

⁴¹ Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 2.

possible to know God because God makes himself known. Encounter with God, wherever and however it takes place, is God's gift. Man's 'demonstration' of God's reality is always based on God's self-demonstration in reality for man."⁴² Hence, theology (from the Greek words *theos*, meaning God, and *logos*, meaning word) must be grounded in God's self-revelation if it is to truly say anything meaningful about God. When it comes to knowledge of God human beings are only privileged to know those things that God has chosen to reveal.

The protestant reformers understood revelation in terms of general and special revelation. General revelation being that which can be known of God through observance of the natural world (God's creation) and special revelation being that which God has chosen to reveal through the history of God's people (Israel and the church), the Bible and Jesus Christ as attested to in Scripture. As Shirley Guthrie points out, "The movement of theological reflection here is from God to us; God seeks and finds us."⁴³ This is an important point to make inasmuch as an exploration of any doctrine from a Calvinist/Reformed perspective must always be supported by Scripture if it is to have any legitimacy whatsoever.

As far as John Calvin was concerned the inner witness of the Spirit derives in illuminating Scripture in the heart and mind of the believer. Said Calvin, "Let this point therefore stand: that those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence, it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony

⁴² Hans Kung, *On Being a Christian* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 85.

⁴³ Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*, 40.

of the Spirit.”⁴⁴ Calvin was not here expounding some sort of fundamentalist literalism but rather was writing against those in his day who were attempting to disprove Scripture through human reason. His point being that for the Christian Scripture, more than merely the written words of mortal men, is no less than the Word of God written and the Holy Spirit speaks to Christian believers from its pages. The Westminster Confession echoes that sentiment thusly:

We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem for the Holy Scripture; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man’s salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.⁴⁵

It is for this reason that Calvin was always careful to base his doctrinal propositions on Scripture first and foremost.

So then, if we are to unpack a Calvinist/Reformed doctrine of sanctification we must begin with Scripture and work our way forward from there. Calvin did not write in a vacuum, nor did he construct doctrines out of whole cloth. Rather he tended to defer not only to Scripture but to prominent theological voices of the past, not the least of which was the voice of the apostle Paul. For example, when writing against those who suggested that the doctrine of justification by faith tended to stifle zeal for good works Calvin pointed out that salvation is not some crass transaction whereby people hire and

⁴⁴ *Institutes*, 1.7.5.

⁴⁵ *The Book of Confessions*, 6.005, 122.

sell their labor to God in exchange for heavenly rewards. Rather, salvation is a high calling the end of which is purity of heart and life. Said Calvin:

In this “the grace of the Lord has appeared, that, having renounced all irreligion and worldly desires, we may live sober, holy, and godly lives in this age, awaiting our blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior.” [Titus 2:11-13 p.] Therefore we were not appointed to rouse wrath against ourselves but to obtain salvation through Christ [I Thess. 5:9]. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, which it is unlawful to profane [I Cor. 3:16-17; II Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21]. We are not darkness but light in the Lord, and must walk as children of light [Eph. 5:8-9; cf. I Thess. 5:4-5]. We have not been called to uncleanness but to holiness [I Thess. 4:7], for this is the will of God, our sanctification, that we abstain from unlawful desires [I Thess. 4:3]. Ours is a holy calling [II Tim. 1:9]. It demands purity of life and nothing less; we have been freed from sin to this end, that we may obey righteousness [Rom. 6:18].⁴⁶

As much as we might object to Calvin’s propensity toward proof texting, notice that all of the above references, with the possible exception of the Ephesians texts, are from the Pauline epistles.⁴⁷

As far as the biblical writers are concerned probably none comes closer to laying out a systematic theology than Paul and none of the writings of Paul contained in the New Testament are more systematic than his letter to the Romans. Whereas the other epistles seem to address concrete and particular situations in particular congregations, Romans seems to be more broad and general. There is widespread disagreement among scholars as to the occasion of Romans or Paul’s reason for writing the letter.⁴⁸ As Gunter

⁴⁶ Institutes, 3.16.2.

⁴⁷ Scholars tend to disagree as to whether or not Ephesians was actually written by Paul or attributed to Paul by an unknown author. cf. Frank E. Gaebelein Gen. Ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Volume II* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 3.

⁴⁸ Karl P. Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991).

Klein points out, “Paul, despite his epistolary habits, addresses the Romans with a theological treatise which in most parts seems free of any reference to a concrete situation. Paul does not artificially construct the Romans’ need; instead, for him it results from their objective situation, which shows them still lacking the fundamental kerygma.”⁴⁹ Klein’s point is that Paul had announced an impending visit to Rome and, knowing he would have a great deal of work to do in terms of instructing the Romans in the faith, sent them some study material so they could prepare in advance.

Whatever Paul’s reason for writing to the Romans he covers the theological waterfront rather nicely. From justification by grace through faith to baptism and from law versus grace to sanctification, it’s all in there. One overarching theme of Romans is Paul’s assertion that God is God of the whole creation. According to David Bartlett, “The claim that in Jesus Christ God does what is right for the whole creation is at the heart of the letter to the Christians at Rome. The claim that God is God of all people and of all the universe speaks to each of the concerns that caused Paul to write his letter.”⁵⁰

Beyond that it is important in understanding Paul’s writings (in Romans and elsewhere) to read Paul in terms of Jewish Apocalyptic. As Paul Achtemeier points out:

It is clear therefore that if Paul took over the basic categories of apocalyptic Judaism rather than the way of understanding reality that was to result in Gnosticism, he also adapted those categories in the light of his conviction that in Jesus of Nazareth God had already begun his final act of the transformation of human history and his creation. What Paul has done is to collapse the two ages (or *aeons*, the Greek word) into one another because of his conviction that with the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth God has already begun to

⁴⁹ Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate*, 42.

⁵⁰ David L. Bartlett, *Westminster Bible Companion: Romans* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 3.

inaugurate the new age, the full and visible establishment of which will occur when Jesus returns to judge all humankind. That means that while the past (as in Gnosticism) is important for Paul, because it was the period of the Jews as the chosen people and of Jesus as the Messiah, and while the future (as in apocalyptic Judaism) is important, because it will be the period when history finally reaches its goal and the new age will be fully established, the present is also important, because the forces of the new age are already at work within it enabling human beings to align themselves with it or against it.⁵¹

Put more simply, “Paul believes that God is in charge of history and that God’s new age has already begun. The world that is full of sin and distress is real enough but on its way out; the world that is full of grace and peace is real enough and to spare, full measure and running over. For those with eyes to see what God has done in Jesus Christ and faith to accept God’s doing, a new world has already begun.”⁵²

It is because of Paul’s belief in the in-breaking age to come that he can say in baptism we have become “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11b). As Paul’s thought progresses in Romans 6 he mixes the metaphors just a bit, from dying to sin and rising with Christ to slavery to sin versus slavery to righteousness. William Greathouse sees Romans 6:15-23 in terms of sanctification as a new obedience.

According to Greathouse:

[Paul] begins by restating the question of v. 1. **What then? Shall we sin** (*hamartesomen*, “are we to sin?”), **because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid** (15). But this is not merely a repetition of the previous question. The first question was, “Are we to continue *in* sin?” This one is, “Are we to continue *to* sin?” The former deals with the permanent state of sin, the latter with the act of disobedience. In vv. 1-14 the apostle has demonstrated the fundamental incompatibility between grace and sin (*he hamartia*, “the sin”). A man who has died to sin cannot live

⁵¹ Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1985), 9.

⁵² Bartlett, *Westminster Bible Companion*, 10.

any longer therein. He has passed out of the old order of death in Adam into the new order of life in Christ – and this life is a holy existence.⁵³

Calvin expanded on this theme by tying sanctification to the power of resurrection when he wrote:

The apostle says: “We were engrafted in the likeness of his death, so that sharing in his resurrection we might walk in newness of life” [Rom. 6:4 p.]. Hence, in another passage, from the fact that we have died with Christ [Col. 3:3] he derives proof that we must mortify our members that are upon the earth [cf. Col. 3:5]. So he also infers from our rising up with Christ that we must seek those things above, not those on the earth [Col. 3:1-2]. By these words we are not only invited through the example of the risen Christ to strive after newness of life; but we are taught that we are reborn into righteousness through his power.⁵⁴

That is, newness of life is not merely a matter of us trying to emulate Christ by way of our own will power. Rather, we are enabled by God’s grace to live the life of the age to come in and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Calvin is always careful to attribute the entire salvation experience to the grace of a sovereign God and never to merit or good works. According to Calvin, “God’s eternal election is the foundation and first cause both of our calling and of all the benefits which we have received from God...holiness, innocence, and every virtue in men, are the fruit of election...all our holiness and innocence of life flow from the election of God.”⁵⁵ As John Webster points out:

⁵³ William M. Greathouse, *Beacon Bible Commentary: Romans I and II Corinthians* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1968), 142.

⁵⁴ Institutes, 2.16.13.

⁵⁵ John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 124.

If there exists a human realm of holiness, holiness has an enduring human and social form, then that form is to be traced to its generative source in the electing activity of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, condensed into the single word: *exelexato* – he chose. But alongside this: if there is an election of grace, then it is no mere self-enclosed divine movement, but a moving power in human history, that which has as its *telos* the recreation of a holy people of God, bound to him as the echo of and testimony to his own proper holiness. Election and sanctification, in other words, are inseparably linked.⁵⁶

The whole of Calvinist thought is centered in the doctrine of election.

That being said, it bears repeating that we are human beings and not automatons.

As such we have been endowed with free will. With that understood the question arises as to the role of human free will and human free moral agency. Where does divine election end and human free will begin? That question has plagued the minds of Christian thinkers as long as there have been Christian thinkers and has led to some of the most important theological debates in Christian history. Perhaps the best known of these controversies is the Augustine-Pelagian controversy in the early 5th century C.E.

Pelagius was a British monk who saw the Christian life as a system of merit whereby one could attain salvation by choosing not to sin. As far as free will was concerned Pelagius agreed with Augustine that the source of evil is in human free will but he disagreed with Augustine in that he believed human beings are free to choose not to sin. If not, sin would be excusable.⁵⁷ According to Pelagius, there are three features in action – the power (*posse*), the will (*velle*) and the realization (*esse*). Of these three features the first comes exclusively from God but the other two belong exclusively to

⁵⁶ Webster, *Holiness*, 59.

⁵⁷ Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume I* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1984), 214.

human beings so that humans are only to blame according to how we act.⁵⁸ Pelagius had a few favorite proof texts, among them Deuteronomy 30:19 (I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live. ESV). He reasoned from this text that God has left the final decision of blessing versus curse and life versus death up to human free will.⁵⁹

For his part, Augustine taught that without God's help no one can overcome the temptations of this life by free will alone but that grace is absolutely necessary from beginning to end. According to J.N.D. Kelly:

He envisaged grace under several aspects. There is, first, 'prevenient grace' (from *Ps.* 59, 10: 'His mercy will go before – in Latin, *praeveniet* – me'), by which God initiates in our souls whatever good we think or aspire to or will. Again, there is 'cooperating grace', by which He assists and co-operates with our will once it has been bestirred. There is also 'sufficient grace' (or the *adiutorium sine quo*) and 'efficient grace' (the *adiutorium quo*). The former is the grace which Adam possessed in Paradise and which placed him in the position, subject to his using his free will to that end, to practice and persevere in virtue. The latter is granted to the saints predestined to God's kingdom to enable them both to will and to do what He expects of them. But grace of whatever kind is God's free gift: *gratia dei gratuita*. The divine favour cannot be earned by the good deeds men do for the simple reason that those deeds are themselves the effect of grace; grace bestows merits, and is not bestowed in reward for them.⁶⁰

As appealing as the Pelagian argument may be to those who see Augustine's view of human free will to be overly pessimistic, the Augustinian view eventually prevailed in terms of official church orthodoxy. Augustine spent the last 20 years of his life primarily

⁵⁸ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1978), 358.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 367.

fighting against the Pelagians and, as a result, Pelagianism was condemned as a heresy by councils at Milevis and Carthage (416 and 418), by Popes Innocent I and Zosimus, and by the Emperor Honorius.⁶¹

It was Augustine's belief that grace not only issued in the justification of sinners but also in the ethical content of the life of believers. In 412 C.E. Augustine wrote *De spiritu et littera* which lays out his understanding of the ethical component of grace perhaps more succinctly than any of his writings, as is clear in the following excerpt:

We for our part assert that the human will is so divinely aided towards the doing of righteousness that, besides being created with the free choice of his will, and besides the teaching which instructs him how he ought to live, he receives also the Holy Spirit, through which there arises in his heart a delight in and a love of that supreme and unchangeable Good which is God; and this arises even now, while he still walks by faith and not by sight. That by this earnest, as it were, of the free gift he may burn to cleave to his Maker, and be on fire to approach to a share in that true light; that from him from whom he has his being he may also derive his blessedness. A man's free choice avails only to lead him to sin, if the way of truth be hidden from him. And when it is plain to him what he should do and to what he should aspire, even then, unless he feel delight and love therein, he does not perform his duty, nor undertake it, nor attain to the good life. But to the end that we may feel this affection 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts' not 'through the free choice which springs from ourselves,' but 'through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us' (Romans iv. 5).⁶²

Clearly, Augustine believed there was more to the Christian life than merely making all the right choices. Again, the gift of grace does not make human beings into automatons for God. Augustine taught that before the fall we were free both to sin and not to sin. Since the fall, however, we are free only to sin. In redemption the grace of God restores

⁶¹ Richardson and Bowden, *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 435.

⁶² Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 54.

the freedom of the human will such that we are now free to choose both to sin and not to sin.⁶³ Augustine is important to this discussion for a couple of reasons.

First, he is widely recognized as the most influential of the Latin patristic writers.⁶⁴ Augustine's development of the doctrine of the Trinity, for example, has influenced Christian thinkers across both the Catholic and Protestant traditions. Secondly, Augustine's thought with regard to sin and grace and, especially, predestination and election were profoundly influential on John Calvin. While Calvin is most widely known for his views on predestination and (to a lesser degree) irresistible grace, the truth is those themes were not original with him but were developed out of Augustinian thought. While Calvin was initially concerned with expanding upon the Lutheran emphasis on justification by faith (also a central theme in Augustinian thought) he also insisted that "actual holiness of life is not separated from free imputation of righteousness."⁶⁵ As Stanley Hauerwas points out, "Calvinists stressed the importance of the sanctification of the Christian and the Christian community. Christians were expected to examine their lives daily so they might grow into holiness. This theme was retained in the Anglican tradition and was given particularly strong emphasis in the Wesleyan revival in England as well as other forms of Pietism."⁶⁶

In fact, it could be argued that the preeminence given to predestination in Calvinism is more a product of Calvin's successors than of Calvin himself. For Calvin, predestination was just one part of the whole. Theodore Beza and the Reformed

⁶³ Gonzalez, *History of Christianity: Volume I*, 214.

⁶⁴ Alister McGrath, ed., *The Christian Theology Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 376.

⁶⁵ Institutes, 3.3.1.

⁶⁶ Stanley Hauerwas, *Sanctify Them in the Truth* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 28.

Scholastics, on the other hand, tended to make it a centerpiece of their idea of Calvinist orthodoxy. “Since, as Calvin had seen, this was a doctrine that usefully underlined human reliance on God’s grace and the sovereignty of God over all of life, they tended to be impatient to get to the doctrine early on in their theological systems. While Calvin thought the doctrine needed to be set in the context of our reflection on how grace comes to us, many of his successors believed that predestination was so important that it should be a part of our first reflections on the being of God.”⁶⁷ Consequently, what we end up with is in many ways more a caricature of Calvin than anything resembling the breadth of Calvinist theology.

One of the earliest and most important theological controversies among Calvin’s successors was the Arminian controversy which was resolved (ostensibly at least) at the Synod of Dort in the Netherlands in 1618.⁶⁸ The controversy surrounded the teaching of a Dutch Calvinist pastor by the name of Jacobus Arminius who began to raise questions about the doctrine of predestination. Arminius was concerned that an overemphasis on predestination and a denial of the freedom of human beings to have a say in their own salvation was leading people to be morally complacent. Arminius argued that individuals are free to either accept or reject God’s offer of grace. One of his biggest concerns was that of overcoming the charge that Calvin’s teachings on predestination effectively made God the author of sin.

⁶⁷ Christopher Elwood, *Calvin for Armchair Theologians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 155.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

While Arminius might be commended for advocacy on the part of human freedom the net result of his argument was the loss of the Calvinist emphasis on the absolute sovereignty of God. The delegates to the Synod of Dort condemned the teachings of Arminius and set about systematizing Calvin's theology by way of the acrostic TULIP, based on the famous Dutch flower of the same name. TULIP stands for T (Total depravity), U (Unconditional election), L (Limited atonement), I (Irresistible grace) and P (Perseverance of the saints).⁶⁹ It is worth noting that Calvin himself never used such an acrostic, nor was his theological scheme ever so neatly organized. In other words TULIP is an oversimplification of Calvin that is, again, more a caricature of Calvin than Calvin himself. Sadly, an overemphasis on predestination and so-called TULIP Calvinism have tended to give us a lopsided and superficial Calvinism that fails to do justice to the richness of Calvin's thought. One of the unfortunate results of this is that whereas with Calvin everything begins with grace, his successors began with election to the extent that Christ died only for the elect and human freedom plays no role whatsoever.⁷⁰ One cannot help but wonder if Calvin himself would have approved of such a system.

The Arminian controversy is a prime example of the Calvinist caricature. To look at the controversy purely as a squabble over the role of freedom in salvation is to oversimplify the matter. Further, as Jason Vickers has noted, "...the Synod of Dort was not called to settle a disagreement between Calvinists and Arminians, as though Arminians did not belong to the Reformed tradition. This is an understandable mistake. After all, the fact that the synod came down so hard against the Arminians gives the impression that there must have been little common ground between the two parties. In

⁶⁹ Elwood, *Calvin for Armchair Theologians*, 157.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 159.

point of fact, the two parties in the dispute shared a common theological language. The Arminians, no less than ‘Calvinists’, spoke the language of ‘covenant’ or ‘the covenant of grace’.”⁷¹ A deeper study would seem to indicate that the central problem was not so much human freedom but rather the freedom of God. The Arminian party made an interesting point in that if the eternal decrees of God are so immutable as to be irresistible then even God does not have the freedom to override God’s own decrees. The ‘Calvinists’ and the Arminians both ended up accusing each other of placing limits on the freedom and sovereignty of God. What is really intriguing about this is, as Vickers points out, “...both the Arminians and the ‘Calvinists’ could find support for their views in Calvin.”⁷² Again, one wonders if the Synod of Dort would have even taken place had Calvin still been alive to mediate the discussion.

All of this is important if for no other reason than that Arminianism did not die at the Synod of Dort. Arminianism underwent a revival of sorts in the theology of John Wesley and his successors in Methodism and the Wesleyan holiness groups, most of who refer to their theology by such terms as “Wesleyan/Arminian.” For Wesley the issue was not so much whether a person could or could not resist the grace of God in salvation. He was convinced that the atonement made grace available for all but he was not a Universalist. “On Wesley’s analysis, salvation was for every person, but it was conditioned on repentance, trusting faith and obedience. Without obedience, there was no real faith, and without faith the universal scope of salvation went unrealized.”⁷³

⁷¹ Jason E. Vickers, *Wesley: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2009), 85.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 87.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 94.

Now one could argue that by placing repentance as a condition of salvation Wesley was in a sense putting the onus for salvation on the believer, thereby circumventing the sovereignty of God. In other words, people are not saved by grace but by their own ability to repent, but not so fast. According to Vickers, “Wesley clearly believed that people were incapable of discerning, much less entering into the covenant of grace on their own accord. Because of the devastating effects of the fall, the Holy Spirit must restore the spiritual senses, enabling them to discern the covenant of grace and assisting them to respond favourably to it. While the technical term for this was prevenient grace, it should be duly noted that, at the level of the restoration of the spiritual senses, it was also irresistible grace.”⁷⁴

It should also be noted that Wesley did not invent the term “prevenient grace” but rather borrowed the term from Augustine. For Augustine, as for Wesley, it is only by grace that anyone can turn to God or aspire to what is good. The same is true for Calvin. In his comments on Augustine’s book *On Rebuke and Grace to Valentinus* Calvin wrote, “Thus there is left to man such free will, if we please so to call it, as he elsewhere describes: that except through grace the will can neither be converted to God nor abide in God; and whatever it can do it is able to do only through grace.”⁷⁵ So it would appear that with regard to election and free will Calvin and Wesley, both heavily influenced by Augustine, may not have been as far apart as some of their contemporary followers might like to believe.

As far as sanctification is concerned it may be important to bring Wesley into that conversation as well. Although there are some obvious differences between his teaching

⁷⁴ Vickers, *Wesley: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 96.

⁷⁵ Institutes, 2.3.14.

on the subject and that of John Calvin there are a great many similarities as well. Most of the differences are not so much theological disagreements as they are differences in focus and trajectory. The reason it is important to include Wesley in the conversation is that both he and Calvin taught widely on the subject and yet there is and has always been a great deal of confusion among their spiritual offspring, which has led to a deafening silence in many quarters. For Calvin and for Wesley sanctification was as much a part of the experience of grace as was justification. Both men believed very strongly in the work of the Holy Spirit both in convicting people of their sinfulness and need of repentance and in empowering the process of growth in Christlikeness. For Calvin, sanctification was one part of the whole (albeit a very important part). For Wesley it became more or less the centerpiece of his theological system as he was the first to use the rather unfortunate terms “entire sanctification” and Christian perfection” to refer to his understanding of the doctrine of holiness. These are unfortunate terms not for reasons of theological accuracy but for their propensity to evoke misunderstanding even among Wesley’s ecclesiastical descendants and even more so his theological detractors.

John Wesley spent a major portion of his career defending himself against those who accused him of promoting empty pietism or, worse, perfectionism. “Even the Methodists, working from their own unexamined Latin traditions of forensic righteousness, tended to interpret ‘perfection’ in terms of a perfected spiritual elitism and so misunderstood Wesley and the early Eastern traditions of *teleos* as a never ending aspiration for all of love’s perfecting fullness. Thus, ‘Christian Perfection’ came to be the most distinctive and also the most widely misunderstood of all Wesley’s doctrines.”⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Abert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, ed., *John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 69.

This may help to explain why so many Methodist laypeople have never even heard of sanctification, much less understood its meaning. Or, as Jason Vickers has it:

Sadly, Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification was a matter of controversy and debate for most of the latter half of his life. Moreover, it has been a matter of intense and at times acrimonious debate among his ecclesiastical descendents [sic]. Indeed, deep divisions over the doctrine of sanctification have occurred across the centuries within various Wesleyan and Methodist communions. These divisions have often been so painful that many Wesleyan and Methodist communions have all but ceased talking about the doctrine that Wesley claimed was the reason that God raised up the people called Methodists in the first place. Thus, in many Wesleyan and Methodist circles, talking about sanctification at clergy conferences and in local churches is like talking about politics at a dinner party. It is the sort of thing people avoid lest they start a fight on an otherwise pleasant occasion.⁷⁷

An interesting development when one considers how careful Wesley was to explain the doctrine.

Indeed, Wesley did not construct "Christian Perfection" out of whole cloth. The terms "Christian Perfection" and "Entire Sanctification" may have been original with him but the doctrine itself was built upon raw materials that had existed within the Reformed tradition all along. What Wesley was attempting to do was expound upon his own experience by way of his theological understanding and exposition of the relevant scriptures. His was not so much a brand new doctrine as it was a matter of emphasizing a facet of Christian theology that he felt had been neglected. It is also intriguing that teaching on sanctification would have fallen into such obscurity within Methodist circles when one considers what the United Methodist discipline has to say on the subject. "We hold that the wonder of God's acceptance and pardon does not end God's saving work,

⁷⁷ Vickers, *Wesley: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 102.

which continues to nurture our growth in grace. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to increase in the knowledge and love of God and in love for our neighbor. New birth is the first step in this process of sanctification. Sanctifying grace draws us toward the gift of Christian perfection, which Wesley described as a heart ‘habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor’ and as ‘having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked.’”⁷⁸

Much of the controversy and misunderstanding over Wesley’s doctrine of entire sanctification has to do with the question of whether sanctification is a gradual process of growth in grace or an instantaneous experience. Or, put another way, is entire sanctification something that happens subsequent to and separate from justification? Some have read Wesley that way. The problem with such an abstraction is that it creates different classes of Christians. You have the basic, stripped down, unsanctified model and the super deluxe entirely sanctified model. Or, as Mildred Bangs Wynkoop points out, “The final step in the abstracting process is to lift sanctification completely away from justification, in *fact* as well as in thought, so that the great debate becomes, Who *is* a Christian – the sanctified only (meaning one who has received a second work of grace), or could one who is ‘justified only’ be saved?”⁷⁹ Wynkoop insists that for Wesley, justification and sanctification are, in a sense, two sides of the same coin:

Wesley’s concept of justification is very high – so high indeed that it may seem to some that he is confusing it with sanctification BUT THIS IS JUST THE POINT. Wesley insisted that sanctification began in justification, - not only is Christ *for* us, but He is *in* us. This lifts the whole redemption enterprise to a new

⁷⁸ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church: 2004* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2004), 47.

⁷⁹ Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1972), 304.

level of meaning. Something begins in justification that has no ceiling. It ushers the new Christian into a relationship to Christ that entails a way of life. It opens up new depths and new vistas of meaning and new levels of personal relatedness to our Lord. The newest Christian is not a second-class citizen of heaven but a real member of Christ. Justification and sanctification are not two *kinds* of grace, but two *dimensions* of the experience of God's love and grace.⁸⁰

For Wesley sanctification was not just a point on a continuum or just one more letter in a theological outline. It was all about a deepening of love.

Jason Vickers illustrates this deepening love relationship perhaps more succinctly than anyone ever has as follows:

To the degree that sanctification has to do with love, logic breaks down entirely the moment we notice that love is not the sort of thing that has a ceiling or some other limit. It is not like, say, a sauce pan than [sic] can hold so much and no more. Thus people often say that they know the moment at which they fell in love. Yet, when probed, they will sometimes say that there were subsequent moments at which they fell in love with one another in ways they did not previously know existed. Suffice it to say that, if there are often unsounded depths in the love that exists between individuals, then surely this is infinitely multiplied when we are dealing with the love that exists between human individuals and God.⁸¹

With regard to sanctification as an experience of God's love and grace, nothing more need be said. Both Vickers and Wynkoop have beautifully illustrated the fact that sanctification and justification cannot be compartmentalized. Love does not work that way.

John Calvin made a similar point in the *Institutes* in his refutation of Osiander's doctrine of "essential righteousness." Said Calvin, "as Christ cannot be torn into parts, so

⁸⁰ Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love*, 311.

⁸¹ Vickers, *Wesley: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 103.

these two which we perceive in him together and conjointly are inseparable-namely, righteousness and sanctification. Whomever, therefore, God receives into grace, on them he at the same time bestows the spirit of adoption [Rom. 8:15], by whose power he remakes them to his own image. But if the brightness of the sun cannot be separated from its heat, shall we therefore say that the earth is warmed by its light, or lighted by its heat?⁸² Calvin's point, it would seem, was that justification and sanctification go hand in hand. Whomever God justifies, God also sanctifies and vice versa. And, since the Holy Spirit is free it is a mistake to try and stuff the Spirit into a human doctrinal box and insist that the Spirit always does things in a particular way and on a particular time line. The problem with a lot of holiness preaching is that sanctification gets preached as the preacher's experience such that the Spirit is denied the freedom to work in particular lives in particular ways.

Of course, none of this is to suggest that there aren't differences between the Calvinist and Wesleyan doctrines of sanctification. It could be however that those differences are more a matter of emphasis. Whereas Wesley emphasized the power of the Holy Spirit in terms of filling the human heart with love for God and neighbor Calvin was more concerned with the centrality of the Word. Calvin also believed that sanctification was a matter of the heart but he emphasized the power of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the Word such that it moves from the level of mere mental assent to a place of centrality in the heart of the believer. For Calvin, "faith needs the Word as much as fruit needs the living root of a tree."⁸³ "Accordingly, without the illumination of the Holy

⁸² Institutes, 3.11.6.

⁸³ Institutes, 3.2.31.

Spirit, the Word can do nothing. From this, also, it is clear that faith is much higher than human understanding. And it will not be enough for the mind to be illumined by the Spirit of God unless the heart is also strengthened and supported by his power.”⁸⁴ “It now remains to pour into the heart itself what the mind has absorbed. For the Word of God is not received by faith if it flits about in the top of the brain, but when it takes root in the depth of the heart that it may be an invincible defense to withstand and drive off all the stratagem of temptation.”⁸⁵

If justification and sanctification were two sides of the same coin for John Wesley the same can be said for John Calvin. He certainly did not meld the two together but maintained them in tension as two separate and distinct facets of the life of faith. They may have been inseparable but they were not indistinguishable from each other. As Elias Dantas points out, the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the elect amounts to what Calvin referred to as the “double grace of justification and sanctification.”⁸⁶ According to Dantas, “Justification in the New Testament has primarily the forensic meaning of being accounted righteous before the divine tribunal. Sanctification means to be engrafted into the righteousness of God. Justification is imputed righteousness, whereas sanctification is imparted righteousness. In justification the guilt of sin is removed, and in sanctification the stain of sin. Justification makes human beings acceptable to God; Sanctification

⁸⁴ Institutes, 3.2.33.

⁸⁵ Institutes, 3.2.36.

⁸⁶ Elias, Dantas, ‘Calvin, the Theologian of the Holy Spirit’, in *John Calvin and Evangelical Theology*, ed., Sung Wook Chung (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 136.

makes God desirable to human beings.”⁸⁷ Sadly, this double grace understanding has been largely lost in the mainline Protestant tradition.

Many reasons could be given for this. No doubt Western individualism has had a role to play. Certainly any notion of the corporate nature of sin and salvation has been all but abandoned in the American church long ago. The typical American Christian thinks of salvation more in terms of gaining a ticket to the pearly gates in the sweet by and by than he or she does of being grafted into a being-saved community in the world.⁸⁸ In some contexts preaching has been targeted toward individual conversion to the exclusion of any call to experience the life of the Spirit in and through the sacramental life of the church. Rather than invite people to live into the Kingdom of God in the here and now salvation is preached as a destination to be reached there and then. In other contexts the very idea of conversion is considered too politically incorrect to even consider talking about so we end up preaching a political party platform masquerading as the Gospel and building communities of nice practical atheists with really swell food pantries. To the extent that we preach on salvation at all we tend to focus on Justification to the exclusion of Sanctification. No wonder we have church members with bumper stickers on their cars which read, “Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven.”

If John Calvin was, as John Webster calls him, “the theologian of sanctification *par excellence*,”⁸⁹ then one cannot help but wonder why there seems to be such a holiness deficit among his modern day followers. As stated above, individualism plays a major role. As the autonomous individual self was elevated to the highest level of

⁸⁷ Dantas, ‘Calvin, the Theologian of the Holy Spirit’, 136.

⁸⁸ Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 247.

⁸⁹ Webster, *Holiness*, 89.

importance in western and especially American experience, it follows that American Christians in general and Presbyterians in particular would prefer to focus on election without thinking deeply about what they are elected to. As far as Calvin was concerned there is much more to election than merely escaping everlasting punishment or counting ourselves among the saints in the heavenly realm. We are elected to holiness. “But,” writes John Webster, “if we are elected to holiness, then we have been extracted from the sphere of human autonomy; the Christian’s holiness does not stem from the Christian’s decision. However, there is an important complementary truth here: election is election to a way of life.”⁹⁰ Calvin made it very clear that election to holiness means no less than the emptying of ourselves and the denial of our own autonomy that the Holy Spirit might reign supreme in our lives.

In one of the most important passages in the Institutes, Calvin drives this point home as he reminds us that because we have been elected we are no longer our own but God’s:

Now the great thing is this: we are consecrated and dedicated to God in order that we may thereafter think, speak, meditate, and do, nothing except to his glory. For a sacred thing may not be applied to profane uses without marked injury to him.

If we, then, are not our own [cf. I Cor. 6:19] but the Lord’s, it is clear what error we must flee, and whither we must direct all the acts of our life.

We are not our own: let not our reason nor our will, therefore, sway our plans and deeds. We are not our own: let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own: in so far as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours.

Conversely, we are God’s: let us therefore live for him and die for him. We are God’s: let his wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions. We are God’s: let all the parts of our life

⁹⁰ Webster, *Holiness*, 80.

accordingly strive toward him as our only lawful goal [Rom. 14:8; cf.

I Cor. 6:19]. O, how much has that man profited who, having been taught that he is not his own, has taken away dominion and rule from his own reason that he may yield it to God! For, as consulting our self-interest is the pestilence that most effectively leads to our destruction, so the sole haven of salvation is to be wise in nothing and to will nothing through ourselves but to follow the leading of the Lord alone.

Let this therefore be the first step, that a man depart from himself in order that he may apply the whole force of his ability in the service of the Lord. I call “service” not only what lies in obedience to God’s Word but what turns the mind of man, empty of its own carnal sense, wholly to the bidding of God’s Spirit. While it is the first entrance to life, all philosophers were ignorant of this transformation, which Paul calls “renewal of the mind” [Eph. 4:23]. For they set up reason alone as the ruling principle in man, and think that it alone should be listened to; to it alone, in short, they entrust the conduct of life. But the Christian philosophy bids reason give way to, submit and subject itself to, the Holy Spirit so that the man himself may no longer live but hear Christ living and reigning within him [Gal. 2:20].⁹¹

This is the essence of what it means to be a “Pentecostal Presbyterian.” As such, what this project seeks to accomplish is not the creation of some new movement within the Presbyterian Church but rather a recovery of something old, namely, an authentically Reformed doctrine of holiness.

Historical Foundation

Anyone who undertakes a study of church history will quickly discover that the student often learns as much about theology as he or she does about church history. In many ways the two disciplines go hand in hand. Theology does not develop in a vacuum and it is impossible to fully understand a particular theological system without taking into account the evolution of said system over time. With that having been said much of the

⁹¹ Institutes, 3.7.1.

historical foundation for this project has already been covered in the theological foundation. While it may not be necessary to cover the entire history of Presbyterianism within the scope of this project there are certain important historical developments within Presbyterian history that have particular bearing on the identity of the congregation that is its context.

New Jersey Presbyterian Church has just celebrated its 200th year as a congregation. The name of the church itself has profound historical significance. The area that is now Carlisle, Ohio owes its parentage in no small part to a man named Arthur Vanderveer, a native of Freehold, New Jersey who some time around 1800 came to the area on a tour of public lands with a view to settlement.⁹² Having located a suitable parcel he returned to New Jersey and convinced his cousin Tunis Vanderveer, who is largely thought of as the father of New Jersey Presbyterian Church, to return with him. Over a period of a few years Tunis Vanderveer managed to induce several families from Freehold to join him in settling what was then known as the “Jersey Settlement.” Most of those families were either Presbyterian or else inclined toward Presbyterianism “as evidenced by the churches from which they came. Among these may be named the Old Dutch Presbyterian Church near Freehold, the Bound Brook Church, the Raritan Church, the Sourland Church and the old Tennent Church.”⁹³ It is this last church, the old Tennent Church, that is of particular interest.

The old Tennent Church gets its name from some of the most important figures of the first Great Awakening. William Tennent, Sr. was a Presbyterian minister, first in

⁹² Chamberlain, *New Jersey Presbyterian Church*, 8.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

New York and later in Pennsylvania, who was one of the first in America to recognize the need for both better education and more warm-hearted piety among American clergy. He was also concerned that the rapidly expanding American frontier was creating a critical shortage of British-educated clergy. To that end he established an academy for the training of ministers in Nashaminy, Pennsylvania that came to be derisively referred to as, “The Log College.”⁹⁴

Among those educated at the Log College were Tennent’s own sons Gilbert, John and William, Jr. Gilbert Tennent quickly emerged as a major leader in the Great Awakening.⁹⁵ “To the unconverted and self-righteous he preached the terrors of the law; to those under conviction, he preached grace and mercy; to the converted, he offered admonitions to piety and godly living. By the close of the 1720s Tennent’s congregations were convulsed with religious revival. Gilbert’s brother John witnessed a considerable awakening among his congregation at Freehold, New Jersey, a work continued after his death in 1732 by still another brother, William, Jr.”⁹⁶ That is the church which came to be known as Old Tennent Church.⁹⁷

Another powerful figure in the Great Awakening was Jacob Frelinghuysen, pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church at Raritan, New Jersey.⁹⁸ Frelinghuysen insisted on the necessity of conversion and visible evidences of new spiritual life in professing

⁹⁴ Randall Balmer and John Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1993), 27.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 28.

⁹⁷ Chamberlain, *New Jersey Presbyterian Church*, 12.

⁹⁸ Lefferts Loetscher, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1978), 67.

Christians and was probably the single greatest influence on the ministry of Gilbert Tennent.⁹⁹ While Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield are more well-known for their influence on the Great Awakening, Tennent and Frelinghuysen were no less important and, in fact, were personally acquainted with Edwards and Whitefield.¹⁰⁰ Of course it is impossible some two hundred years later to know exactly what was in the hearts of Carlisle's original settlers but there can be little doubt they were heavily influenced by Frelinghuysen and the Tennents since most of them were members of the churches where those men had been pastors. Indeed, it is probable that their parents and grandparents had actually been in attendance when Frelinghuysen and the Tennents were preaching in those churches. Clearly, the settlers were devoted to their home church because as soon as possible upon arrival in their new home they founded New Jersey Presbyterian Church and housed it in a brand new building which was almost an exact replica of old Tennent Church back home in Freehold. The name "New Jersey Presbyterian Church" as it turns out, denotes the fact that this congregation has a direct connection to one of the greatest revivals in American history.

Of course, the NJPC story does not begin in Freehold, New Jersey any more than it begins in Carlisle, Ohio. Nor did the Great Awakening begin in a vacuum but rather resulted from the confluence of divergent streams of Reformed thought which had existed separately in the old world and merged together in the new. The influence of Dutch pietism upon Gilbert Tennent is just one example. Another is the influence of people like George Whitefield, who was an English Calvinist as well as a colleague of John and

⁹⁹ Loetscher, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, 67.

¹⁰⁰ Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 29.

Charles Wesley.¹⁰¹ In fact, Presbyterians themselves have never been a monolithic group. While John Calvin is thought to be the theological father of us all, strictly speaking he did not found Presbyterianism. As Frank Mead points out:

He merely laid the foundations upon which it was constructed – in Switzerland, Holland, France, England, Scotland, and Ireland: From France came the Huguenots, and by 1560, there were in that country 2,000 churches of Presbyterian complexion; the people of Holland established the Dutch Reformed Church; British Presbyterians gained courage in their struggle against “Bloody” Mary Tudor; and from Scotland came the Covenanters and John Knox.¹⁰²

It was the Scottish Presbyterians that ultimately had the most influence on American Presbyterianism, particularly in the middle colonies.

The most influential leader of the Scottish reformation was John Knox who became involved in the cause of reform in 1546.¹⁰³ Knox had become involved in a rebellion against French Catholicism at Saint Andrews. When the French captured Saint Andrews they took John Knox prisoner and forced him to work at hard labor in galleys for nineteen months. After his release he spent twelve years in exile, traveling between England, France, Switzerland, and Germany. It was during that time that he studied for a time under John Calvin. When he returned to Scotland in 1559 he discovered the fledgling movement he had left behind had spread all across the land. According to Lefferts Loetscher, “Now the whole land was seething with discontent, ripe for reformation. After some fighting, in which valuable assistance was received from Elizabeth I, the Protestant queen of England, the French, who had usurped control of the

¹⁰¹ Gonzalalez, *The Story of Christianity, Volume 2*, 212.

¹⁰² Mead, *Handbook of Denominations*, 199.

¹⁰³ Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 17.

country, were driven out. The Scottish Parliament which met in 1560 abolished Roman Catholicism, and set up as the religion of the land what soon became fully developed Presbyterianism.”¹⁰⁴ As important as John Knox’s movement was however, it was what happened later in Ireland that had the most significant influence on American Presbyterianism.

Every American grade-schooler learns the story of the Mayflower Pilgrims and how it was that they left England and landed at Plymouth Rock in search of a new life. The Pilgrims, as we all learned in grade school, were Puritans. While many of them may have had Presbyterian leanings they were not, per se, Presbyterians.¹⁰⁵ The story of how Presbyterians became established in the colonies is not nearly as glamorous. How many American grade-schoolers have ever even heard of Ulster or know anything about the Scotch-Irish after all? In fact most Americans, when asked, think “Scotch-Irish” refers to someone who is of mixed Scottish and Irish ancestry. The truth is certainly more interesting than that.

It all goes back to a rebellion that took place in the Ulster region of Northern Ireland in the late 1500s. When James I ascended to the English throne in 1603 he invited colonists from England and Scotland to settle land in Ulster which had been confiscated by the crown. The Scots, many of whom were desperately poor, responded so enthusiastically that very soon the population of Northern Ireland was more Scottish than Irish.¹⁰⁶ At that time the English church, which was Episcopalian, was dominant in

¹⁰⁴ Loetscher, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, 37.

¹⁰⁵ Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 23.

¹⁰⁶ Loetscher, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, 42.

Ireland. All the new arrivals from Scotland however were either Presbyterian or un-churched. Soon, the English church was so overwhelmed that they gave up all hope of converting these people from Presbyterianism to Episcopalianism. Even the efforts of King Charles I to stamp out Presbyterianism through persecution fell short.¹⁰⁷

The native Irish, who were all Catholic, resented this invasion of their country and rose up in revolt in 1641, massacring many of the Protestant immigrants. In response, Scotland sent 10,000 troops to put down the rebellion and maintain order. Since most of the Episcopal and Scotch-Irish Presbyterian clergy had either been killed in the insurrection or driven out of the country the only clergymen left were the Presbyterian chaplains of the Scottish troops. According to Lefferts Loetscher, “For soldiers, these Scots were remarkably religious, for each regiment was organized as a church congregation, having over it a session of chaplain and soldier-elders. In 1642 the first presbytery ever formed in Ireland was organized out of these regimental church sessions.”¹⁰⁸

The persecution of Scotch-Irish in Ulster never really ended however and that, coupled with severe economic hardship, inspired many of the Ulster Scots to set out for the New World in search of a better life. Most of them settled in the middle colonies. As Balmer and Fitzmier have noted, it was an area “marked by religious and ethnic pluralism utterly without parallel on either side of the Atlantic. This area, especially New Jersey and Pennsylvania, became the nexus of colonial Presbyterianism.”¹⁰⁹ Not that there

¹⁰⁷ Loetscher, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, 43.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 24.

weren't already settlers in the colonies who at least had Presbyterian sympathies. The aforementioned Puritans come to mind. According to Balmer and Fitzmier:

As the seventeenth century wore on, a few Presbyterians from New England headed south, where, joined by the Scots-Irish, their numbers soon were large enough to justify an appeal to Northern Ireland for ministers. Francis Makemie, among several others, answered that call. After his arrival in the New World in 1683, Makemie launched his American career in Maryland, but his itinerancy and his organizational efforts were significant enough to earn him the sobriquet "father of American Presbyterianism." Makemie and other early Presbyterian leaders worked with both the New England strain of Presbyterianism, with its emphasis on experiential – or, in the argot of the day, "experimental" – piety, and with the more confessional faith of Scots-Irish Presbyterians.¹¹⁰

This confluence of "experimental" piety and confessional faith created the nexus into which the Great Awakening was born. It also led to the first Presbyterian split in American history as the church divided into two camps, the staid and doctrinaire "Old Side Presbyterians" and the more experiential "New Side Presbyterians" who joined in the awakening.¹¹¹

Truth be known, this split was about more than just the Great Awakening. There had been a simmering dispute among American Presbyterians long before the revival happened. As mentioned before, the Scotch-Irish tended to be confessional in their faith, demanding strict adherence to the Westminster Standards. Many of the New England Presbyterians were more experiential and tended to resist any requirement to subscribe to creedal formulas. Jonathan Dickson, for example, warned that adoption of strict creedal formulas represented a return to Romanism and Anglicanism and a betrayal of the

¹¹⁰ Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 24.

¹¹¹ Dillenberger and Welch, *Protestant Christianity*, 124.

authority of Scripture.¹¹² A Synod meeting was called in 1729 to resolve the issue of subscription and a compromise was reached in the Adopting Act of 1729, which was meant to distinguish between the essential and nonessential elements of the Westminster standards. “Any minister or ministerial candidate who had reservations about the Westminster articles was required to state his scruples at the time of his subscription. The presbytery would then judge whether or not the scruple could be resolved within the broader outlines of Westminster theology.”¹¹³ The compromise did not completely resolve the issue of course and the Presbyterian movement was ripe for a split by the time the Great Awakening happened just a few years later.

The Old Side and New Side Presbyterians did eventually reunite but the truce was tenuous at best. In the early days of reunion there was a struggle for power that revolved largely around control of the college at Princeton. By that time William Tennent had closed down the Log College and while Princeton was not its direct successor the first few presidents of Princeton were all Log College graduates. After several New Siders had come and gone from the presidency of Princeton an appeal was made to John Witherspoon of Scotland to take the helm. According to Balmer and Fitzmier, “Witherspoon became a moderating force between Presbyterianism’s factions. His Scottish Presbyterian background and his comprehensive knowledge of continental Reformed theology (both of which were Old Side shibboleths, and both of which would become highly valued theological benchmarks among subsequent generations of Princetonians) plus his reputation for warm-hearted piety (the chief concern among New Side partisans) uniquely qualified Witherspoon to mitigate remaining Old Side – New

¹¹² Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 25.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

Side animosities and to recast colonial Presbyterianism along traditional lines.”¹¹⁴ It seems the course for American Presbyterianism was charted and, for the most part, the traditionalists had won the day.

It really is not possible to know to what degree the founders of NJPC sympathized with the New Side. Considering the fact that their home church was ground zero for New Side revivalism it seems a foregone conclusion that there would have been some effect. The NJPC history book doesn't have much to say about it but there are a couple of clues along the way. It seems that the early days of the church saw some dramatic and rather spontaneous revivals which would lead one to believe there was a general openness to the revival spirit. The first one happened almost fifteen years to the day from the church's founding. On August 17, 1828 communion was observed and five new members were added to the church. This brought the total membership from forty five to fifty. The following entry from the history book cites what happened next:

And from this time on for several months there was a continuous season of revival. Of this time the pastor writes: “A spirit of solemnity and deep conviction seemed to pervade the whole community. Oh! Such prayer meetings, and such earnest, agonizing prayers, I never witnessed before nor since. Wherever neighbors met each other the theme of conversation was the interest of the soul. Young people would come to my house to talk on the subject of religion and be prayed for. Often in my own house we would have a little prayer-meeting, composed of inquirers, and as the result of this gracious work between eighty and ninety members were added to the church.”¹¹⁵

An entry from 1853 reports a similar outpouring. “God was again pleased to visit this church with the reviving influences of His Spirit. Another precious season similar to the

¹¹⁴ Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 33.

¹¹⁵ Chamberlain, *New Jersey Presbyterian Church*, 14.

one already spoken of was enjoyed. Many souls were converted and added to the church. At one communion season, we are told, thirty-five persons professed their faith in Christ.”¹¹⁶ If these entries are any indication the early days of NJPC were marked not by doctrinaire traditionalism or anything resembling Old Side dogma but by warm hearted piety and an open-ness to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

As the frontier continued to expand there were other examples of revivalism within American Presbyterianism which on their face did not directly involve NJPC. One such movement was the Cane Ridge revival of 1801, in Cane Ridge Kentucky. According to Justo Gonzalez, “It was originally organized by the local Presbyterian pastor, who announced a great assembly or ‘camp meeting’ for the promotion of a deeper faith.”¹¹⁷ Although there were also Baptists and Methodists involved with the Cane Ridge revival it was the Presbyterians who suffered persecution from their denomination over their involvement. As Balmer and Fitzmier point out, “Many Presbyterians took a dim view of some of the infamous revival excesses of the Kentucky awakening and looked askance at the theology that undergirded revival preaching, a theology that emphasized human initiative in the salvation process rather than an abject reliance on the unmerited grace of God... Under increasing pressure to bring their preaching into line with strict Reformed doctrines, disgruntled members of the Cumberland Presbytery withdrew from the Synod of Kentucky in 1810 and formed what became the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Chamberlain, *New Jersey Presbyterian Church*, 14.

¹¹⁷ Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity, Volume 2*, 245.

¹¹⁸ Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 46.

While this development may seem unrelated to the happenings at NJPC there is a connection. There was a strong Cumberland Presbyterian presence in the 19th century American Holiness movement which eventually led to the formation of the Church of the Nazarene. One of the early founders of the Church of the Nazarene was a Cumberland Presbyterian minister from Nashville by the name of J.O. McClurkan.¹¹⁹ McClurkan was also the founder of Trevecca Nazarene College,¹²⁰ my alma mater. There can be little doubt that NJPC's connection with the First Great Awakening and the current pastor's roots in the holiness movement are more than mere coincidence.

¹¹⁹ Timothy L. Smith, *Called Unto Holiness: The Story of the Nazarenes* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1962), 21.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 188.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

As stated in the abstract, the methodology for this project is qualitative, using primarily congregational statistics as means of analysis. There is one caveat however. John Creswell makes the point that today's research methods, especially in the social sciences, tend to be less quantitative versus qualitative and more a synthesis of the two. This is what Creswell refers to as mixed methods research. As he puts it, "The best that can be said *tend* to be more quantitative or qualitative in nature."¹ As it turns out, there are other ways for me to measure results than just looking at congregational statistics. Using the members of the Evangelism Committee, the context associates and the ministry staff as a focus group I conducted a pre and post survey, the results of which can be found in Appendix C.

Along the way, several people were involved in helping to implement the project. The six context associates, three of whom serve on the Evangelism Committee, have proved to be invaluable partners in this endeavor. In addition, they all attend my Sunday school class where we have been studying the theological foundations together for more than four years now. The members of the ministry staff have also been an indispensable part of the process. The four of us have developed a real sense of camaraderie and team spirit such that we function as a unit. The three professional associates have served in an

¹John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Second Edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 4.

advisory capacity. Dr. Joe Hookey has been especially helpful. In addition to being a professional associate on the project he also serves as the liaison between the presbytery's Committee on Ministry and the congregation. He and I also serve together on the presbytery Leadership Council. He is a true mentor and friend. With all that having been said, the following are some of the major ways in which the context has been transformed as a result of this project as we sought to rethink our approach to ministry in the local church. See Appendix D for a timeline.

Rethinking Worship

“WORSHIP IS AT THE VERY heart of the church’s life. All that the church is and does is rooted in its worship. The community of faith, gathered in response to God’s call, is formed in its worship. Worship is the principle influence that shapes our faith, and is the most visible way we express the faith.”² It would seem the preceding should go without saying. Unfortunately, for many Christians worship is more an afterthought than anything approaching centrality. That is especially true in mainline Protestant denominations like the PCUSA. According to the Presbyterian Mission Agency, in 2013 the average congregation reported an average worship attendance that was equal to roughly half the number of actual members.³ At the outset of this project NJPC was even less than that number. The membership at the end of 2010 stood at 190 and the average attendance for the year was seventy three giving us an attendance to membership ratio of thirty eight percent. Since that time we have tended the roll and removed a number of

²*Book of Common Worship*, 1.

³Presbyterian Mission Agency, “The Top 10 Most Frequently Asked Questions About the PC (USA),” accessed September 29, 2014, [http:// www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/research/10faq/](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/research/10faq/).

inactive members so that as of this writing the membership stands at 151 and the average attendance so far in 2014 is eighty four. That is a drastic improvement (fifty six percent) but still not where we need to be. The good news is that attendance continues to increase and much of that has to do with this project.

The first thing we did upon implementation of the project was to reevaluate our understanding of worship. It may seem trivial but one of my first questions had to do with my mode of dress. Having spent most of my ministry in the United Methodist Church and having studied liturgics at an ecumenical divinity school (Vanderbilt) I had become comfortable with wearing clerical vestments, an elaborate pulpit robe with a long, brightly colored stole and a rather large cross. I understood the theological meaning behind those symbols but had not considered the question of whether such ostentation really belonged in a Presbyterian pulpit. Upon further study it occurred to me that perhaps they did not.

Meanwhile, the PCUSA was at that same time in the process of ratifying a new Form of Government that would at least partially answer the question. Under the old form of government the pastor's official title was "Minister of the Word and Sacrament."⁴ Under the new form of government the titles "elder" and "Minister of the Word and Sacrament" were replaced by a much older terminology that had fallen out of usage, namely, "ruling elder" and "teaching elder." Pastors, obviously, fall into the latter category but the idea is to do away with the clergy laity split which had crept into our practice over the years and return the church to a more Presbyterian understanding of

⁴*The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part II: Book of Order 2007-2009* (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly, 2007), G-6.0200.

polity whereby the church is understood as being governed by elders and not by pastors or some kind of clerical hierarchy.

Although John Calvin never really addressed the priesthood of all believers in systematic form he tended to agree with Luther on the subject.⁵ As Paul Tillich points out the Protestant principle of the “priesthood of all believers” amounts to a protest against “a priesthood which is separated from the laymen and which represents a sacred degree in a divine-human hierarchical structure.”⁶

The Reformed rejection of a hierarchical priesthood is spelled out succinctly in the Second Helvetic Confession:

Surely in the new covenant of Christ there is no longer any such priesthood as was under the ancient people; which had an external anointing, *holy garments* (italics added), and very many ceremonies which were types of Christ, who abolished them all by his coming and fulfilling them. But he himself remains the only priest forever, and lest we derogate anything from him, we do not impart the name of priest to any minister. For the Lord himself did not appoint any priests in the Church of the New Testament who, having received authority from the suffragan, may daily offer up the sacrifice, that is, the very flesh and blood of the Lord, for the living and the dead, but ministers who may teach and administer the sacraments.⁷

The Second Helvetic Confession, being a product of the Swiss Reformation, reflects the Swiss reformers’ deep disdain for undue ornamentation in the church. With regard to clerical vestments, “As early as 1523, Ulrich Zwingli called for the abolition of priestly vestments in his Reformed Church in Zurich.”⁸

⁵Institutes 2.15.6n15.

⁶Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Volume Three* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 208.

⁷*Book of Confessions*, 5.154, 92.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency makes the point that in the early days of the Reformation liturgical garments were, for all intents and purposes, the street clothes of the era. The Geneva gown, for example, was not per se a liturgical vestment but was an academic gown which was once commonly worn in public by those with academic degrees. “Continuing in the tradition of the Reformers, some pastors choose to wear contemporary street clothes — business suits, for instance — to downplay the impression of clericalism and to emphasize the ministry of all believers. However, the risk in this choice is that of identification with the power and privilege of corporate culture.”⁹ This pastor, having no concern about being identified with corporate culture, has chosen to lay aside the clerical and/or liturgical vestments so as to more closely identify with the people in common ministry.

Having made that decision it next became necessary to rethink the liturgy itself. A little historical inquiry produced a copy of a worship bulletin from 1957 which revealed just how radically the worship life of NJPC had changed over the years. In 1957 the liturgy was very simple and informal. The worship order was more revivalist in nature in that the sermon was at the end of the service, although there was no invitation. By the time this project began worship at NJPC had evolved into more of a prayer book liturgy, extremely formal and lectionary driven with lots of readings, unison prayers, etc. The sermon occurred very early in the service and was followed by the offering, pastoral prayer/Lord’s prayer and so on.

⁸Encyclopedia of Protestantism, “Vestments,” accessed August 6, 2014, <http://protestantism.enacademic.com/619/vestments>.

⁹Presbyterian Mission Agency, “Signs and Symbols,” accessed August 6, 2014, <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/faq-signssymbols/>.

Not that there was anything un-Presbyterian about NJPC's liturgy but there did need to be some thought given to how it got that way. It seems in traveling around to various churches within the Protestant mainline there is very little difference in worship style from one denomination to another. In any event, Presbyterian worship has been rather fluid over the centuries so it becomes difficult to place one's finger on exactly what is and is not an authentically Presbyterian worship style. As the Book of Common Worship points out, Reformed worship has run the gamut from the service book tradition of the sixteenth century, through the Puritan rejection of formal traditions and come full circle back to a formal service book tradition in most quarters.¹⁰ What we experience as normative in most PCUSA churches today is what the Book of Common Worship describes as an ecumenical convergence, "the fruit of a movement that is now over one hundred and fifty years old."¹¹

As a result of this project the session and ministry staff of NJPC decided to take a fresh look at the congregation's liturgy with a view toward making it freer and more open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. This was not a contemporary versus traditional type of decision. This was in no way an attempt to manipulate worship as some kind of church growth gimmick. Instead it was an effort to be more intentional in terms of examining each individual act of worship in a particular service as to its potential effectiveness in opening the worshiper to the movement of the Holy Spirit rather than just worshiping by rote, which had become the normal pattern.

¹⁰The Theology and Worship Ministry Unit for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 2-5.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 7.

It is difficult to know exactly what worship looked like at NJPC in its early days but there are some clues. As mentioned in the Historical Foundation section, the congregation was founded by people with a direct connection to the first Great Awakening. Being a frontier church in a frontier community, a church with a strong sense of revivalism, it would seem almost a foregone conclusion that the worship style was what James F. White refers to as “Frontier Worship.”¹² According to White:

The Frontier tradition in Protestant worship came about as a response to a practical pastoral problem: how to minister to a largely unchurched population scattered over enormous distances of thinly settled country. The method that eventually proved most workable derived from sacramental worship rather than from preaching services. The Scottish Presbyterian practice of sacramental seasons three or four times a year had been transplanted to this country by Scotch and Scotch-Irish immigrants in western Pennsylvania and western North Carolina. This involved an intensive period of examination of conscience and preparation for the Lord’s Supper, concluding with celebration of the sacrament itself, all over the course of several day.

In 1796, James McGready (ca. 1758-1817) left his church in western North Carolina to serve three small churches in Logan County, Kentucky. In the summer of 1800, he staged what is sometimes called the first camp meeting as an outdoor communion season at Gaspar River, Kentucky. This is as convenient a date as any for the origin of the Frontier tradition, although there certainly are historical connections to the Great Awakening of 1725-1760.¹³

There is some mention of communion seasons in the NJPC historical sources. For example, in August of 1828 five people were added to the church during the “third communion season...and from this time on for several months there was a continuous season of revival (during which) between eighty and ninety members were added.”¹⁴ In keeping with that tradition we have moved in a direction which might be described as

¹²White, *Protestant Worship*, 171ff.

¹³White, *Protestant Worship*, 173.

¹⁴Chamberlain, *New Jersey Presbyterian Church*, 14.

frontier worship with a Pentecostal emphasis on freedom.

One way this has been accomplished is by way of the weekly Tuesday morning staff meeting, which was instituted as part of this project. Whereas prior to the implementation of the project the pastor had been solely responsible for designing the weekly worship service that task is now done by the pastor in consultation with the ministry staff with equal input from each staff person. The meeting begins with prayer and a discussion of the previous Sunday's worship experience. What went well? What could've been done better? What would we change if we could do it again?

Then, looking forward to the upcoming service, the next step is a Bible study based on the passage for next Sunday's sermon. Even if the sermon is not yet complete the staff does know what the sermon will attempt to accomplish and what will be celebrated. Starting with a blank slate, two questions are asked. What acts of worship will take the congregation from the sermon to the benediction and what acts of worship will bring the congregation from the call to worship to the sermon? In other words, what is the most effective strategy for preparing the congregation to hear this sermon? The result is a worship service that is very heartfelt and experiential and one that is a bit more holistic in that everything revolves around one central biblical text. We try to think through each act of worship as to its potential to speak to the people in the pews rather than just going through a preset ritual each week. The goal is to invite the Holy Spirit in and be transformed by the Spirit's presence and power. We actually adopted a slogan, complete with graphics promotional materials. It's called, "90 Life Changing Minutes."

Rethinking Preaching

If worship is at the heart of the Christian life then, at least for those of us in the Reformed tradition, preaching is at the heart of worship. As H. Ray Dunning points out, “In the beginning, the Protestant emphasis was upon the priority of the Word with sacrament as a way of proclaiming the Word through symbol. Hence Preaching was the focal point of Protestant worship.”¹⁵ If it is true that, “The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God”¹⁶ then it should follow that those of us who have been called to preach would take on the task with the utmost seriousness. Unfortunately, that has not always been the case even at NJPC.

One of the things I have found curious in many Presbyterian churches, NJPC included is the way in which church architecture betrays a view of preaching that is more Catholic than it is Reformed. No one at NJPC can remember exactly when the change took place but to the best of everyone’s recollection the pulpit was in the center until sometime in the 1950s, at which point the sanctuary was remodeled. Since then the pulpit has been on the left as one faces the chancel, with a lectern on the right and the communion table in the center. According to H. Ray Dunning, the centrality of preaching in Protestant worship was traditionally reflected in “distinctive architecture in which the pulpit (on which the Bible should be laid) is placed at the center of the building with all lines directing toward it.”¹⁷ Dunning continues, “In more recent times many Protestant churches have modified this earlier emphasis by an architectural change, using a divided chancel with the altar at the center. This emphasizes the priority of the sacrament and is a

¹⁵Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 534.

¹⁶*The Book of Confessions*, 5.004, 53.

¹⁷Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 534.

return to the Catholic view.”¹⁸ Whether or not NJPC made a conscious theological decision or merely arranged the sanctuary that way because they thought it would be prettier is anybody’s guess at this point. What is clear is that whether consciously or subconsciously the centrality of preaching had largely given way to other concerns prior to the implementation of this project.

While remodeling the sanctuary to reflect a more Presbyterian understanding of preaching would certainly be a worthy undertaking it is not one that is practical or feasible as of this writing. What is rather curious is that, although the communion table is in the center of the chancel no one at NJPC recalls a time when the Eucharist was celebrated on a weekly basis. While weekly celebration of the sacrament would certainly be an appropriate response to the preaching of the Word from a Reformed theological standpoint, that has not been the practice in most North American Presbyterian congregations for a very long time, if ever. Be that as it may, the liturgy of NJPC had evolved over time into a very rigid and predictable high church liturgy with a Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon, Old Testament reading, Psalm, Epistle and Gospel readings and a sermon which was usually taken from the Gospel reading. It was all lectionary driven, including the preaching. All of these elements occurred early in the service with the response to the Word usually being the Pastoral Prayer and Offering. Although there was a good bit of Scripture reading the sermon seemed somewhat incidental and there used to be a certain number of people who would complain if it was longer than twenty minutes.

As for my own preaching, it had been lectionary driven as well. I had been

¹⁸ Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 534.

following the Revised Common Lectionary for so many years it had rarely occurred to me to even consider an alternative. Of course, there are some very good reasons to follow a lectionary. The lectionary, for example, keeps preachers from riding hobby horses and preaching their own sacred canon. But, as Ernest T. Campbell points out, there are some serious negatives as well. “When suitable texts are prechosen, some of the magic of homiletical creation is lost. Yes, lectionary preaching has the merit of making preachers confront the biblical text, and textual preaching is always superior to topical. Yes, the lectionary preacher will often meet with other pastors in the area in a common search for meaning. And all of this is good, but there are also outweighing negatives to consider.”¹⁹ Campbell goes on to list several of those negatives, among them, “The number of aids, helps, and ‘ponies’ available now to the working pastor are staggering in their array. The agony that goes with selecting and exegeting a text is replaced by findings of others who have already done the digging.”²⁰ Campbell goes on to point out that while “the lectionary reduces the range of possibilities and simplifies the choice...simpler is not better. A caring pastor should exegete his community and parish to ascertain what word is needed. She should ponder the Scriptures as she knows them in search of the requisite passage. Your digging should be your own. It is better to fail with your own material than to succeed with someone else’s.”²¹ My own experience bears this out. If one preaches through the three year lectionary cycle enough times there is a danger in becoming stale and losing one’s sense of wonder in the Word of God. If the preacher becomes bored

¹⁹Ernest T. Campbell, ‘A Lover’s Quarrel With Preaching,’ in *What’s the Matter With Preaching Today?* ed. Mike Graves (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 55.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 55.

²¹*Ibid.*, 56.

with the preaching task how can the preacher expect the congregation to maintain any sense of wonder and excitement in hearing the Word preached?

My first step in moving away from the lectionary was to preach through the entire Bible in one year. Obviously, one cannot preach the entire Bible in a year's time so we asked people to commit to a daily Bible reading plan which would take them through the entire Bible in a year. Each Sunday the sermon was taken from one of the texts they had read the previous week. The resource we chose was "The Daily Bible"²² and "The Daily Bible Devotional."²³ Twenty three people saw it through from start to finish and they were all people who had never read the entire Bible before. It was a very profitable exercise and accomplished two things. It helped to emphasize the centrality of Scripture in the life of Faith and it gave the preacher a means of escaping from the cycle of the Revised Common Lectionary and an opportunity to preach from many texts I had never preached from before. It also was a very effective way of emphasizing the centrality of Scripture.

Since the initial goal of this project was to reintroduce the congregation to the Doctrine of sanctification it seemed a good way to begin doing that was to preach a series on Holiness. That was done beginning in April of 2012. The series was entitled, "Pentecostal Presbyterians" and is outlined in Appendix A. Having stressed the true nature of the church as a community called out and set apart for the service of God that series was followed up with a series on the Ten Commandments entitled, "Etched in Stone: Ten Words to Live By," an outline of which can be found in Appendix B.

²²*The Daily Bible, New International Version* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1984).

²³F. LaGard Smith, *The Daily Bible Devotional* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1984).

This series was meant to build on the foundation that was laid in the Holiness series. The central idea being that the church, like Israel of old, has been set free from sin and set apart for the service of God. If so, what does that look like in actual practice? As Hauerwas and Willimon have said, “The Ten Commandments are meant for those who are known by the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the God of Jesus Christ. The commandments are the way we learn to worship the true God truthfully, not the way we make American democratic pluralism work...”²⁴ The commandments are not guidelines for humanity in general. They are a countercultural way of life for those who know who they are and whose they are. Their function is not to keep American culture running smoothly, but rather to produce a people who are, in our daily lives, a sign, a signal, a witness that God has not left the world to its own devices.”²⁵

We are called and sanctified to be a disciplined worshiping community through which God can affect the salvation of the world. With all that in mind, preaching takes on a greater significance than perhaps it would otherwise. Legalism and moralism simply will not get the job done. Most of us, if not all of us, have from time to time succumbed to the tendency toward legalism and moralism to one degree or another. It is easy to do. Law is much easier to preach than grace and moralism is not holiness. We all know the Bible has much to say about social justice but there is more to preaching Biblical justice and righteousness than merely parroting a secular political agenda, throwing in a little Jesus language and calling it gospel. That happens far too often in contemporary American pulpits.

²⁴Hauerwas and Willimon, *The Truth About God*, 14.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 18.

The gospel is intensely political but it is its own politic and cannot be held captive to such superficial notions of justice as are commonly propounded by the political left and the political right in contemporary American politics. What is needed is a gospel that transcends the secular worldview and takes seriously the fact that the Kingdom of God cannot and will not be subservient to political parties and nation states. We in the PCUSA, having adopted the Theological Declaration of Barmen as one of our confessions should know that as well as anyone. According to the first thesis of Barmen, “Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death. We reject the false doctrine, as though the church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God’s revelation.”²⁶

Barmen nails this down even further in the third clause thusly, “We reject the false doctrine, as though the church were permitted to abandon the form of its message and order to its own pleasure or to changes in prevailing ideological and political convictions.”²⁷ While the immediate context of Barmen was the rise of the Third Reich and the complicity of the German Church in the atrocities perpetrated under National Socialism, Barmen can still speak to us today because the ultimate issue is idolatry and the church is susceptible to that temptation in every time and era, including our own. As Margit Ernst-Habib notes, “It is more difficult to identify the events, powers, figures, and truths that *we* substitute for the Word of God. Barmen reminds us that the old fight

²⁶*The Book of Confessions*, 8.11 and 8.12, 249.

²⁷*The Book of Confessions*, 8.18, 249.

against idolatry, which is a key issue in the Reformed tradition, is not over and will not be over any time soon. Barmen also reminds us that idols claiming our loyalty are not only found outside the church, but may be found in the middle of the church's life and proclamation."²⁸ All that to say that the pulpit needs to be ever vigilant against the gentle slide into secularism whereby the preaching of the Word of God gets subtly (or not so subtly) replaced by the preaching of the word of man. That is especially true in a congregation like NJPC which has Democrats and Republicans among the membership in more or less equal numbers.

Holiness preaching, however else it might be defined, lifts up the reality that God's sanctifying grace can transform us and empower us to grow into the likeness of Christ. If that idea sounds a lot like Wesley it also has deep roots in Calvin. In a long discussion of Calvin's interpretation of Ezekiel 36:26 ("And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.") and Romans 6:14 ("For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."), Ronald Boer makes the point that Calvin stressed the twofold nature of grace. The first step is justification. "The second is none other than sanctification through the Spirit, as both our texts make abundantly clear. Christ may carry out the first step, but now the Holy Spirit comes in on a tag-team play and completes the second. But what is 'to be sanctified [*sanctificati*]?' A combination of *sanctus*, holy or consecrated, and *ficeo*, make--so, to make holy—sanctification involved for Calvin another two steps. One must aspire to blamelessness and purity (*innocentiam puritatemque*). But note here that it also involves being

²⁸Margit Ernst-Habib, 'A Conversation with Twentieth-Century Confessions' in *Conversations with the Confessions*, ed. Joseph D. Small (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2005), 69.

Christlike, for he too has *innocentia*, which may also mean uprightness or righteousness.”²⁹ Boer notes further that, “the picture we have is an annihilation of what makes us who we are, and in its place God puts something that comes from deep inside his own being. The old order is obliterated, completely wiped out so that we can make a radically new beginning. The work of grace, it seems, is radically revolutionary, for it creates nothing less than new human beings.”³⁰

The point of all of this, as it pertains to preaching, is that preaching should call people not only to be forgiven but to also submit their lives to the radically transformative power of God’s sanctifying grace. That is one of the central issues this project seeks to address. The central question for each sermon is the question of how this particular Word seeks to effect the transformation of God’s people. A secondary question is this. What do we have to offer people that cannot be found anywhere else? People do not need to attend church to hear political commentary, for example. They can get that at home on the Sunday morning news shows. People come to church to hear a Word from God and they should not be short changed by the pulpit.

What I purposed to do very early in this process was return to my roots in the holiness movement and my call as a holiness preacher. Along the way I had the advantage of having spent the better part of fourteen years studying homiletic theory and methodology. What I needed was not so much a new *way* of preaching but a recovery of an old understanding of content although there is one exception. This Doctor of Ministry program exposed me first hand to a new understanding of the African American preaching tradition in a way that could not be found through reading books or studying it

²⁹Ronald Boer, *Political Grace* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 51.

³⁰Boer, *Political Grace*, 45.

in the classroom. For the first time I was actually immersed in the Black church and gained a new understanding and appreciation for what that tradition has to offer to the church at large. Perhaps most importantly, as noted earlier in this document, is the role of celebration in preaching. Borrowing heavily from the work of Dr. Frank Thomas, as one example, I learned to always ask myself what a particular sermon will seek to celebrate and what particular acts of worship might enable the congregation to celebrate the Word they have just heard. The result is a worship experience which begins and ends in a celebration of God's grace in Jesus Christ.

Appendix C is a sketch of a sermon that was preached at a special called meeting of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley on June 22, 2014. This meeting was, for all intents and purposes, an extension of this project. I, as chair of the Leadership Council proposed that the presbytery should spend more time together in worship and that we should call a meeting for that purpose. I worked together with Rev. Ronald Lawrence of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Dayton and Dr. Terrence Grimes, music director at Trinity to put the service together. The Trinity choir and the choir from NJPC combined to provide the music. Trinity is a majority African American congregation and the idea was for our two churches to work together in designing a worship service that would be part Pentecostal meeting and part Black church revival. The service was held at Corinth Presbyterian Church in Dayton and is an example of what Pentecostal Presbyterians looks like in a worship context.

Rethinking Evangelism

At the outset of this project, NJPC had struggled for many years with an inadequate understanding of evangelism. The congregation was doing very little in terms of outreach to the community with the result that many people in the community, when they heard mention of NJPC would say they never heard of it. That is rather strange, considering the church is 200 years old and located right in the center of town. We wondered how the church could have possibly become so obscure. One clue was found in the fact that, some years ago, the session decided to change the name of the Evangelism Committee to the Outreach and Missions committee. When asked why that change was made the answer was that people were uncomfortable with the term, “evangelism.” They felt that evangelism was merely a matter of living the Christian life in such a way that people could see Jesus on display. Not that such an understanding is altogether wrong but one of the central emphases of this project is that God has called the church out of the world to go back into the world proclaiming the gospel in word and in deed. It became immediately obvious that NJPC was deficient in the first of those categories with the result that it had become deficient in the second. That problem is by no means limited to NJPC of course. Presbyterians are notoriously bad at evangelism.

Perhaps we are just timid, not wanting to be confused with those pushy door to door fundamentalists. Or, could it be that we just haven’t been taught? As Ron Crandall points out, “One of the tragedies in many churches today is that no one is very involved in evangelism. Although almost all congregations have a preacher, most of the preachers see themselves as shepherds of the flock, or chaplains and program managers—not evangelists. In many cases these pastors have received little seminary training or

encouragement to be involved in evangelism. Whatever preaching or teaching they engage in is designed much more to instruct and challenge the faithful than to engage and invite a turnaround for ‘the perishing,’ ‘the dying,’ ‘the erring,’ ‘the fallen,’ and ‘tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.’”³¹ Amen to that. In the case of NJPC the reality is a little different. This pastor was educated at Trevecca Nazarene University and Nazarene Theological Seminary where I took courses in church growth and evangelism and even church planting. This project became an opportunity to put some of that knowledge to work.

The first thing we did was change the name of the Outreach and Missions committee back to the Evangelism Committee. The session elected as chairperson one of the context associates from this project. He is a person who is a former Nazarene and Southern Baptist who has vast experience in evangelism and outreach. We also appointed two of the other context associates to serve on that committee. They are both ordained deacons. They are both brilliant and energetic young women who have had profound experiences of the Holy Spirit and who have a deep desire to reach others for Christ. Following are some of the programs the committee has put into place.

We worked with Evangelism Explosion International (EE) to host a Share Your Faith workshop. Seventeen people participated in the workshop, which was designed as a basic introduction to EE but which also served to teach them the basics of sharing their faith with others. That work is ongoing. Very soon we intend to partner with EE in launching an Everyday Evangelism program in the church. Everyday Evangelism is a three part series. Part one is the aforementioned Share Your Faith workshop. Parts two

³¹Ron Crandall, ed. Herb Miller, *Turnaround Strategies for the Small Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 85.

and three each consist of seven weekly sessions that include preparatory devotions, classroom instruction and on-the-job-training.

We began hosting gospel concerts. The chair of the committee, as it so happens, is a gospel music promoter with access to some of the most famous groups in the industry. So far we have hosted The Dixie Melody Boys, The Nelons (twice), The Kingsmen Quartet and The Lefevre Quartet. While southern gospel music is an acquired taste that hasn't been acquired by very many in the PCUSA, these concerts are valuable opportunities for NJPC to reach out to the community in a fresh new way. We do realize that most people who attend a gospel concert already have a home church but, from time to time, people decide to seek a new church home and this gives NJPC an opportunity to be on the list. We have actually picked up some transfer growth because of the concerts and some of those new people are active in helping with our evangelistic efforts. Further, it seems everyone now knows where NJPC is located.

The Evangelism Committee partnered with the Christian Education committee to create what is called, "VBS Club." One thing NJPC has always been very good at is Vacation Bible School. We always have a significant number of children in VBS who come from outside NJPC, many who do not have church homes. The problem has always been how to incorporate those children and their families into the life of the church. The idea behind VBS Club is to extend the fun of Vacation Bible School through events that are held throughout the year so that we can stay in touch with those families face to face.

In addition to VBS Club we launched what we call, "Boots on the Ground." This happens in the run up to Vacation Bible School and is a way of not only promoting the upcoming VBS program but also of seeking one on one evangelism opportunities and just

basically getting to know people in the community on a personal level. This event has grown to such an extent that the most recent one saw us reaching 1000 doors in Carlisle in a single day. So far we have seen one new family come into the church as a result of that effort. The Evangelism Committee is quite active and is constantly on the hunt for new ideas to reach the community for Christ. We know God is doing a special work at NJPC and that the Holy Spirit is in full attendance at our worship services. We want others to experience what we are experiencing so that they too will come to know the joy of the Lord and the life of holiness.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

If there is one glaring weakness in this project it is the lack of empirical data. In retrospect, the project proposal itself is far too broad and open ended to fit into the parameters of a typical Doctor of Ministry project. That having been said, I do believe it is important work and that the results are at least somewhat measurable by way of congregational statistics and anecdotal information. I also believe that what is being done here can be reproduced in other contexts. It all begins in the pulpit. It is my firm conviction that everything we do as a church is done as an extension of the pulpit. If the pulpit is not effective in terms of bringing people into a deeper walk of faith then it stands to reason the ministry of the congregation will not be effective either.

According to Fred Craddock, “The person of the preacher is a vital element in effective preaching.”¹ Dr. Craddock is making the point that if preaching is to be effective it must be grounded in a faith journey wherein the preacher is continually immersed in the Word of God. As he further notes, “Pertaining to the minister’s own faith journey, it is the reflection of many who have spent a lifetime in ministry that of all the exercises for keeping athletically fit one’s Christian values, perspectives, and faith none excels that of preparing and delivering sermons...If preaching discloses self even when we are preaching Christ and not ourselves, then let the one revealed be that growing self which, week after week, probes Scripture, tradition, experience, and the human

¹Fred Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), 22.

condition and shapes for the listeners an appropriate word.”² Preaching should never be an afterthought. Nor should it be just one task among the many. Preaching is central to who we are as ministers.

The one thing that changed very early as a result of this project was that I had to come to terms with my sense of call. That is, who has God called me to be as a preacher and how might I be more faithful in living out that call? The answer was that I had been called to preach within the holiness movement and that call was still valid even though I was now a preacher in the mainline Protestant tradition. I made a conscious decision to return to my holiness preacher roots. That decision effected a change not only in the style of preaching but also in the content. Rather than preach a kind of progressive social gospel, which had become the pattern over the years, I returned to the preaching of a message of personal and corporate transformation. The immediate result was that a spirit of revival began to take hold in the congregation, a revival that continues to this day.

Many people said early on that they sensed the church moving in a new direction and they found it refreshing. Some offered a word of caution however. They were concerned, and rightly so, that there would be people who were resistant. They were correct. A relatively small number of members have stopped attending the church because they fear NJPC has become too conservative and evangelical for them. These are people who want to hear progressivism from the pulpit and are uncomfortable with our departure from the liberal tradition. That is unfortunate but there are always people in every congregation who resist change. And, although the changes in worship style were introduced very slowly over time, there are a relatively small number of members who would prefer a more formal, high church worship order. As a result our worship

² Craddock, *Preaching*, 23-24.

attendance numbers trended downward in year two, from a yearly average of seventy eight in 2011 to a yearly average of seventy five in 2012. While part of that dip can be attributed to unrelated factors such as member deaths it is fair to say that some of it has to do with resistance to change.

In year three, attendance trended back upward to a yearly average of eighty two and now, as of this writing (October 2014) yearly average attendance for year four stands at eighty four. I expect to end the year somewhere around ninety. This trend is largely attributable to the amount of new people who have decided to call NJPC their church home. What we are noticing is that NJPC has become attractive to a good many people from outside the Reformed tradition. Many of these are Baptists and former Baptists who are very evangelical minded who appreciate both the style of worship and the message of heart holiness. They are also the kind of people who have a heart for evangelism and make a conscious effort to invite their friends and relatives.

One such couple began attending the church in 2011. In fact, he was for many years on the staff as pianist/organist. This couple attended the church but never joined. They are both from Baptist backgrounds and were never comfortable with Presbyterian theology as they had heard it preached. In 2000 there was a mass exodus from NJPC and this particular couple was part of it. The reasons are really not pertinent to this discussion but what is pertinent is that they got to know me and were encouraged to give NJPC another try. They were so excited about the new direction that, not only did he agree to rejoin the staff as pianist/organist, they also joined the church. He is not on the board of Trustees and she is a ruling elder serving on session. The day they joined the church they were asked why they chose to join after so many years. Their answer was that it is a

completely different church than it was before, they are excited about what God is doing at NJPC and want to be part of it. They also remarked that for the first time they are hearing a message of salvation from the pulpit. That is just one anecdotal example of what is taking place again and again.

One other example should suffice to illustrate the trend. Another couple who has very recently begun attending NJPC has lived just a few blocks from the church for many years. They are both from Baptist backgrounds and never really gave NJPC a second thought although they have known several of the former ministers and have visited on occasion over the years. They were looking for a new church home and had been invited by some of the people who visited their house during “Boots on the Ground.” They were so impressed by that outreach that they decided to visit and were very excited by what they found. They have told me they see great potential for growth here and want to know how they can get involved. I concur. Those of us in leadership all agree that God is doing something special at NJPC and we expect the congregation is poised for a growth explosion in the very near future.

Many people have said over the years that numbers are not important. They are wrong. I would submit one of the best ways to gauge the overall health of a congregation is by tracking numbers, in particular average worship attendance as a percentage of total membership. Thom Rainer, president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources, says that “for every 10 new members added per year, average worship attendance should increase by 7.”³ NJPC is not there yet but we are getting close.

³Thom Rainer, “Ten Rules of Thumb for Healthy Churches,” accessed October 11, 2014, <http://thomrainer.com/2013/03/04/ten-rules-of-thumb-for-healthy-churches/>.

As of the implementation of this project the active membership stood at 191 and average attendance was seventy eight. That is a pitifully low ratio of forty one percent. In 2011 the Evangelism Committee tended the roll. As a result of that effort a number of inactive members were removed and a few actually became active again. Today the active membership stands at 151 and the average attendance is eighty four. That is a ratio of fifty six percent. Still not seventy but quite a bit better. The Evangelism Committee is currently in the process of tending the roll again. They have identified thirty one people who are still not active. If all thirty one were trimmed from the active roll, at an average attendance of eighty four the ratio would be exactly seventy percent.

Obviously, the committee would prefer not to remove all thirty one inactive members from the roll. The good news is that twelve of the thirty one are people who could be persuaded to come back to church. The other nineteen have either moved away or are attending other churches and need to be asked to move their membership. Assuming that twelve of those people could be brought back into the fold, at a ratio of seventy percent our average attendance would increase from eighty four to ninety three. That would give NJPC an active membership of 132 and an average attendance of ninety three, which equates to a ratio of exactly seventy percent. That is where we need to be in the short term and that is where we are headed.

One final word about number is this. Every congregation has a core of very faithful members who are engaged and involved in the life of the church. NJPC's core has grown over the course of this project. One way to gauge that is by looking at the down weeks. As an example, the Sunday after Christmas is typically one of the lowest attendance days of the year for most churches. On December 26, 2010 NJPC had fifty

seven in attendance. That number has grown each year since. On December 29, 2013, there were ninety one in attendance. In looking at all the typical low attendance days year by year we have seen the attendance go up across the board, which indicates that the number of people we can identify as the core faithful has increased dramatically. This is another healthy sign. The bottom line is that by every objective measure, NJPC has gone from a congregation in steep decline to a congregation on the move and I attribute that fact to this project. The preaching and teaching of heart holiness is having a positive effect.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

What an incredible journey this has been. Although there have been numerous setbacks that have caused the project to go into continuation, still in all it has been a wonderful experience and has certainly served to broaden my understanding of ministry. Of course, the journey is by no means at an end. In fact, this project has set the stage for a rich and profitable ministry going forward, one that will no doubt pay dividends for the Kingdom of God. Along the way, I have formed close bonds with the other members of the peer group, lifelong bonds with brothers and sisters in the Lord who have become more than just fellow students. They are colleagues in ministry and a network of mutual love and support which will be invaluable in the days ahead. Further, upon graduation there is no sense of leaving United Theological Seminary behind. I have truly become part of a unique community and look forward to participation in the life of the seminary until the Lord calls me home.

The journey began with a process of serious soul searching and reflection upon how God had led one preacher, through a series of fits and starts and in spite of the preacher's own mistakes and missteps, to a place where the sense of call and mission became amazingly clear. The process of writing the Spiritual Autobiography was at times painful and yet cathartic. The Contextual Analysis provided an incredible new perspective on the long life of a 200 year old congregation. Both the minister and the

congregation have gained new insights as to the founding of the congregation, insights that have helped us gain a clearer understanding of who God called the congregation to be and who they should be going forward. The people of NJPC, for the first time in many years, have a clear sense of direction and purpose which has turned their focus away from a more inward preoccupation with ministry as service to the membership to a more outward focus on proclamation and reaching out to the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

From a personal standpoint, I have gained powerful theological insights which have helped me to better understand who God has called me to be as a preacher and what I am to accomplish going forward. I originally set out to find the intersections between John Calvin and John Wesley with regard to the doctrine of sanctification and to show that they were more similar than they were different and to show that the Wesleyan tradition is not the sole proprietor of the doctrine of holiness. My contention is that Presbyterians were preaching holiness long before the birth of the Wesleyan movement and that Wesley's teachings were, with a few exceptions, more an expansion on what was extant in Calvinism than anything new or revolutionary. The goal was to answer the question of why the teaching and preaching of sanctification had become such a rarity in Presbyterian contexts and how a recovery of such preaching and teaching might lead to greater vitality in the life of the church.

Along the way I made some startling discoveries, not the least of which was that I came to realize I am still more of a Wesleyan than I had presumed myself to be. I have also come to realize that the Presbyterian Church (USA) may be more Wesleyan than we are willing to admit, particularly when it comes to Predestination and free will. One

major difference between Calvin and Wesley has to do with their understanding of free will. Wesley rejected the idea of irresistible grace, believing with Calvin and Augustine that though humans in their natural state are completely unable to reach out to God, the idea of a purely natural human being is a logical abstraction. No one is devoid of grace unless they have quenched the spirit.¹ Prevenient grace, in Wesley's view, "grants man the *gracious ability* to respond to the call of the gospel; but—and this distinguishes Wesley from Calvin—man is also capable of rejecting this call in the abuse of his freedom. Wesley himself said he was but a 'hair's breadth' from Calvinism, and it is prevenient grace that provides the 'hair.'"² Wesley fully rejected the Calvinist doctrine of double predestination and so, it would seem, has the PCUSA at least to a large degree.

I have never been completely comfortable with double predestination either and, truth be told, most Presbyterians could make the same claim. There is a reason for that. In teaching a class at NJPC on the Book of Confessions I discovered something about the history of the Westminster Standards in the PCUSA that I had not been fully aware of. Westminster has been amended a number of times since the Presbyterian Church was established in North America. The most recent of those amendments was in 1903 when, "the northern church, in reaction against interpretations of the Westminster standards that emphasized divine sovereignty at the expense of human freedom, added articles on 'The Holy Spirit' (6.183-.186) and 'The Gospel of the Love of God and Missions' (6.187-.190). The church did not alter the original Confession's statement that God has predestined the elect to everlasting life and foreordained all other humans to everlasting

¹William Greathouse, *An Introduction to Wesleyan Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1989), 72.

²*Ibid.*

death (6.016), but it argued that these assertions had to be held ‘in harmony with the doctrine of [God’s] love to all mankind, his gift of his Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and his readiness to bestow his saving grace on all who seek it....God desires not the death of any sinner....No man is condemned except on the ground of his sin’ (6.192).”³ In actual practice however, though none of us would profess a wholehearted belief in the doctrine of God’s double decree, the church’s practice of evangelism (or non-practice as it were) would tend to reflect at least an implicit belief in such a doctrine.

In other words, if God has already chosen before the foundation of the world who will be saved and who will be lost then it makes no sense to put much thought or effort into reaching out to the lost with the saving message of the gospel. If we assume that everyone who is in church on a given Sunday is already saved then our messages will tend to be less oriented toward conversion than they might otherwise be. Why give an invitation if everyone is already saved (which might explain why so many Presbyterian worship services do not include invitations)? NJPC, since the implementation of this project, has been giving invitations. Not every service includes an invitation but many of them do. The invitation is not an opportunity to “get saved” but an opportunity to respond in faith to the hearing of the Word. There may indeed be people in church who are on their way to heaven but do not know it. Having received a fresh assurance of grace we want to give them an opportunity to respond and to commit to a deeper level of commitment.

³John P. Burgess, “A Conversation with the Westminster Standards,” in, *Conversations with the Confessions*, ed. Joseph D. Small (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2005), 53.

Admittedly, there have been a relatively small number of people who are not comfortable with the practice of giving invitations. I have actually heard from some who think it is judgmental to suggest that someone might be lost. There is a strong tendency toward universalism in the Protestant mainline these days and the PCUSA is no exception. But to suggest that a decision for Christ is unnecessary is to diminish the importance of the work of Christ's atonement in my estimation. NJPC has become much more evangelical as a result of this project, and unapologetically so.

It has even been suggested by many of the newer members that I am closet Baptist preacher. They mean that as a compliment and I am proud to accept it as such. Whereas there was once a time when I tried to differentiate myself from the Baptists I find that there is much to be commended about Baptist faith and life. While I am not completely comfortable with some Baptist doctrines (Eternal Security comes immediately to mind) I find myself more compatible with my Baptist brethren than I would have realized just a few short years ago. Consider, for example, the Southern Baptist Convention's statement on sanctification. "Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life."⁴ That is as clear and concise a statement as I have seen on the subject.

NJPC's evangelical focus on salvation and holiness has transformed the culture of the congregation whereby the church has now become attractive to people from other

⁴The Southern Baptist Convention, "The Baptist Faith and Message," accessed October 13, 2014, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>.

denominational backgrounds other than Presbyterian, particularly Baptists. We do not deliberately set out to proselytize people from other churches we do not turn them away either. In recent times there has been some turmoil in some of the Baptist congregations in our area and a number of people have gone in search of new church homes. Once upon a time, in the not too distant past, NJPC was persona non grata among the local Baptist community. If a Baptist was looking for a new church NJPC would not be on the list of possibilities. Now, not only are we on the list, we have been told that worshipping with us is like attending a good Southern Baptist church. We take that as a compliment as well. My thought is that the holiness message has a universal appeal. I am quite confident that I could be equally comfortable in most any pulpit. Holiness is non-sectarian.

The project has progressed to the point now that it can no longer be thought of as a project so much as a way of life for the congregation. When it was first launched it was something new and different. Having begun my ministry in the Church of the Nazarene I had made the negative observation that sanctification had become old hat for many in that denomination. They had heard it all before. For the people of NJPC, on the other hand, the preaching of holiness was like a breath of fresh air. As mentioned before there were a relatively small number of mostly very liberal people who found it intimidating. But for the most part the people embraced it with open arms and open hearts.

Now however, four years later, things have progressed to the point that we too have to be on our guard lest it become old hat for us as well. There are a good number of people who were not with us four years ago and NJPC is all they know of Presbyterianism. As far as they know this is the way things have always been. They would be in for a shock if they were to visit another PCUSA congregation. In fact, a few

people have done that very thing and have been amazed at how very different it was. By way of a disclaimer, the preceding statement was not meant as a value judgment but merely a statement of fact. Things have changed so much over the past four years that I cannot imagine myself accepting a call to another PCUSA congregation. It would be a culture shock for me as well as for them and I am not sure I have the energy at my age (fifty seven) to go through the process again. Of course as the old saying goes, “Never say never.”

If there is one thing I have learned through this process it is that the call to ministry is a journey, not a destination. Who would ever have dreamed, when I was first called to preach back in Greenville, South Carolina, that I would end up being a holiness preacher in a Presbyterian pulpit in Ohio? Certainly not I. But God knew all along and it is God who guides our steps. The journey continues. To God be the Glory, great things He hath done.

APPENDIX A
DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY: TWO MILE RADIUS

ministry area profile 2010

New Jersey Presbyterian Church
780 Fairview Drive
Carlisle, OH 45005

Study Area Definition:
2.0 Mile Radius



ID# 236296:236296



Prepared For:
New Jersey Presbyterian Church
780 Fairview Drive
Carlisle, OH 45005

Study Area Definition:
2.0 Mile Radius

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Coordinates: 39:35.11 84:19.46
 Date: 3/24/2011

Prepared For:
 New Jersey Presbyterian Church
 780 Fairview Drive
 Caniste, OH 45005

Study Area Definition:
 2.0 Mile Radius

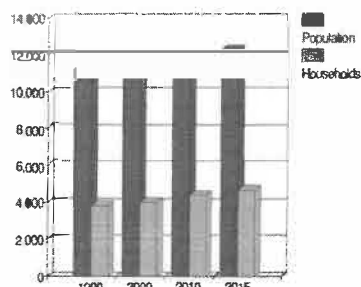
- 1 Q How many people live in the defined study area?**
A Currently, there are 11,700 persons residing in the defined study area. This represents an increase of 436 or 3.9% since 1990. During the same period of time, the U.S. as a whole grew by 23.3%. (see page 4)
- 2 Q Is the population in this area projected to grow?**
A Yes, between 2010 and 2015, the population is projected to increase by 4.9% or 574 additional persons. During the same period, the U.S. population is projected to grow by 5.1%. (see page 4)
- 3 Q How much lifestyle diversity is represented?**
A The lifestyle diversity in the area is *somewhat low* with 14 of the 50 U.S. Lifestyle segments represented. The top individual segment is *Young Suburban Families* representing 33.1% of all households. (see pages 13 and 14)
- 4 Q How do racial or ethnic groups contribute to diversity in this area?**
A Based upon the total number of different groups present, the racial/ethnic diversity in the area is *somewhat low*. Among individual groups, *Anglos* represent 96.8% of the population and all other racial/ethnic groups make up just 3.2% which is well below the national average of 35%. The largest of these groups, *Hispanics/Latinos*, accounts for 1.1% of the total population. *Hispanics/Latinos* are also projected to be the fastest growing group increasing by 29.0% between 2010 and 2015. (see pages 4 and 7)
- 5 Q What are the major generational groups represented?**
A The largest age group in terms of numbers is *Survivors* (age 29 to 49) comprised of 3,517 persons or 30.1% of the total population in the area. Compared to a national average of 29.2%, *Survivors* are also the most over-represented group in the area. (see page 4)
- 6 Q Overall, how traditional are the family structures?**
A The area can be described as *very traditional* due to the above average presence of married persons and two-parent families. (see page 6)
- 7 Q How educated are the adults?**
A Based upon the number of years completed and college enrollment, the overall education level in the area is *very low*. While 76.0% of the population aged 25 and over have graduated from high school as compared to the national average of 80.4%, college graduates account for 7.5% of those over 25 in the area versus 24.4% in the U.S. (see page 8)
- 8 Q Which household concerns are unusually high in the area?**
A Concerns which are likely to exceed the national average include: *Child Care, Divorce, Dealing with Stress, Achieving a Fulfilling Marriage, Good Schools and Parenting Skills*. (see page 16)
- 9 Q What is the likely faith receptivity?**
A Overall, the likely faith involvement level and preference for historic Christian religious affiliations is *about average* when compared to national averages. (see page 15)
- 10 Q What is the likely giving potential in the area?**
A Based upon the average household income of \$58,181 per year and the likely contribution behavior in the area, the overall religious giving potential can be described as *somewhat low*. (see page 4 and 17)

Coordinates: 39:35.11 84:19.46
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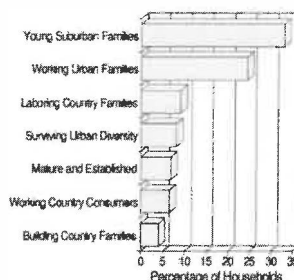
Study Area Definition:
 2.0 Mile Radius

Population and Households

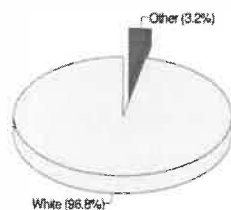


The population in the study area has increased by 861 persons, or 7.9% since 2000 and is projected to increase by 574 persons, or 4.9% between 2010 and 2015. The number of households has increased by 382, or 9.4% since 2000 and is projected to increase by 260, or 5.9% between 2010 and 2015.

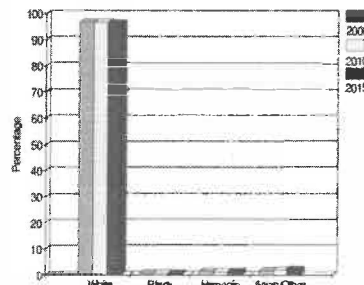
Primary U.S. Lifestyles Segments-2010



Population By Race/Ethnicity-2010

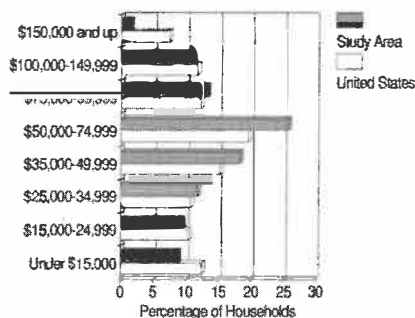


Population By Race/Ethnicity Trend

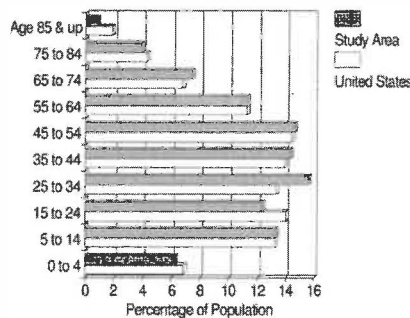


Between 2010 and 2015, the White population is projected to increase by 483 persons and to decrease from 96.8% to 96.2% of the total population. The Black population is projected to remain stable at 0.4% of the total. The Hispanic/Latino population is projected to increase by 37 persons and to increase from 1.1% to 1.3% of the total. The Asian/Other population is projected to increase by 52 persons and to increase from 1.7% to 2.0% of the total population.

Households By Income-2010



Population by Age-2010



The average household income in the study area is \$58,181 a year as compared to the U.S. average of \$69,376. The average age in the study area is 37.5 and is projected to increase to 38.6 by 2015. The average age in the U.S. is 37.6 and is projected to increase to 38.4 by 2015.



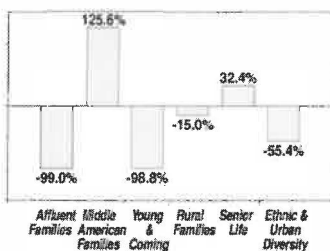
FingerPrint
Your Area Compared To The U.S.

Coordinates: 39:35.11 84:19.46
Date: 3/24/2011

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Carlisle, OH 45005

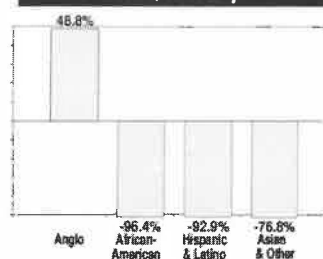
Study Area Definition:
2.0 Mile Radius

U.S. Lifestyles Group

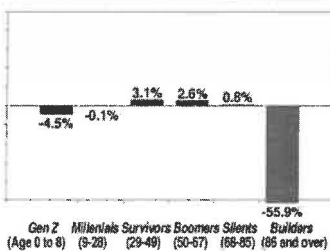


Percentage Above Average
← U.S. Average →
Percentage Below Average

Race/Ethnicity

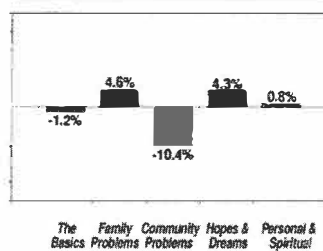


Generations

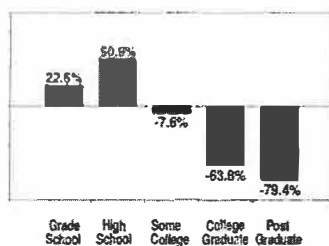


Percentage Above Average
← U.S. Average →
Percentage Below Average

Primary Concern Groups

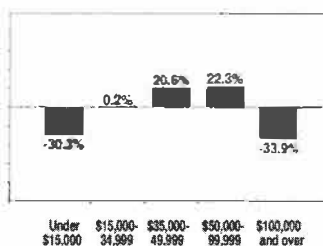


Education Completed by Adults

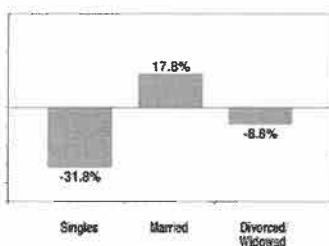


Percentage Above Average
← U.S. Average →
Percentage Below Average

Household Income

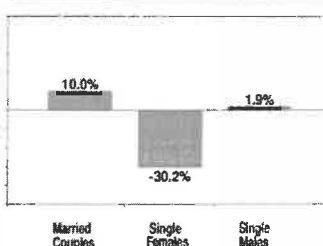


Marital Status



Percentage Above Average
← U.S. Average →
Percentage Below Average

Households with Children



**ministry
area profile 2010**
**2015
PERCEPT**

 Coordinates: 39:35.11 84:19.46
 Date: 3/24/2011

 Prepared For:
 New Jersey Presbyterian Church
 783 Fairview Drive
 Carlisle, OH 45005

 Study Area Definition:
 2.0 Mile Radius

POPULATION

▲ Indicates a consistent upward trend	1990	2000	2010	2015
↓ Indicates a consistent downward trend	Census	Census	Update	Projection
Population	11,264	10,839	11,700	12,274
Population Change		(425)	861	574
Percentage Change		-3.8%	7.9%	4.9%
▲ Average Annual Growth Rate		-0.4%	0.8%	1.0%
Density (Pop. per square mile)	896	863	931	977

HOUSEHOLDS

▲ Households	3,870	4,048	4,430	4,690
Household Change		178	382	260
Percentage Change		4.6%	9.4%	5.9%
▲ Average Annual Growth Rate		0.5%	0.9%	1.2%
↓ Persons Per Household	2.89	2.66	2.62	2.60

POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY

	2000 Census		2010 Update		2015 Projection	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White (Non-Hispanic)	10,480	96.7%	11,323	96.8%	11,806	96.2%
African-American (Non-Hisp)	39	0.4%	51	0.4%	53	0.4%
Hispanic/Latino	142	1.3%	128	1.1%	165	1.3%
▲ Asian/Other (Non-Hisp)	178	1.6%	198	1.7%	250	2.0%

POPULATION BY GENDER

▲ Female	5,368	49.5%	5,908	50.5%	6,211	50.6%
↓ Male	5,470	50.5%	5,792	49.5%	6,064	49.4%

POPULATION BY GENERATION

▲ Generation Z (Born 2002 and later)	0	0.0%	1,356	11.6%	2,182	17.8%
Millennials (Born 1982 to 2001)	2,914	26.9%	3,213	27.5%	3,205	26.1%
Survivors (Born 1961 to 1981)	3,172	29.3%	3,517	30.1%	3,635	29.6%
↓ Boomers (Born 1943 to 1960)	2,855	26.3%	2,469	21.1%	2,401	19.6%
↓ Silents (Born 1925 to 1942)	1,571	14.5%	1,058	9.0%	807	6.6%
↓ Builders (Born 1924 and earlier)	327	3.0%	87	0.7%	43	0.4%

AGE

▲ Average Age	36.0	37.5	38.6
▲ Median Age	36.3	37.2	38.6

INCOME

▲ Average Household Income	\$50,046	\$58,181	\$63,923
▲ Median Household Income	\$44,805	\$52,004	\$56,402
▲ Per Capita Income	\$18,690	\$22,029	\$24,426



2015

Coordinates: 39:35.11 84:19.46
Date: 3/24/2011

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New Jersey Presbyterian Church
780 Fairview Drive
Carlisle, OH 45005

Study Area Definition:
2.0 Mile Radius

HOUSEHOLDS BY INCOME

	2000 Census		2010 Update		2015 Projection	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
▲ \$150,000 or more	42	1.0%	67	1.5%	142	3.0%
▲ \$100,000 to \$149,999	265	6.5%	498	11.2%	637	13.6%
▲ \$75,000 to \$99,999	406	10.0%	585	13.2%	677	14.4%
● \$50,000 to \$74,999	972	24.0%	1,140	25.7%	1,188	25.3%
● \$35,000 to \$49,999	904	22.3%	813	18.4%	806	17.2%
● \$25,000 to \$34,999	576	14.2%	527	11.9%	484	10.3%
● \$15,000 to \$24,999	459	11.3%	415	9.4%	386	8.2%
● Under \$15,000	425	10.5%	384	8.7%	370	7.9%

POPULATION BY PHASE OF LIFE

Before Formal Schooling (Age 0-4)	843	7.8%	735	6.3%	779	6.3%
● Required Formal Schooling (5-17)	1,931	17.8%	2,024	17.3%	2,051	16.7%
● College Years, Career Starts (18-24)	942	8.7%	973	8.3%	1,070	8.7%
Singles and Young Families (25-34)	1,554	14.3%	1,830	15.6%	1,645	13.4%
● Families, Empty Nesters (35-54)	3,274	30.2%	3,388	29.0%	3,477	28.3%
▲ Enrichment Years Singles/Couples (55-64)	1,085	10.0%	1,321	11.3%	1,574	12.8%
▲ Retirement Opportunities (65+)	1,210	11.2%	1,429	12.2%	1,677	13.7%

POPULATION BY AGE (DETAIL)

Under 5 years	843	7.8%	735	6.3%	779	6.3%
● 5 to 9 years	784	7.2%	776	6.6%	762	6.2%
● 10 to 14 years	738	6.8%	780	6.7%	801	6.5%
● 15 to 17 years	409	3.8%	468	4.0%	488	4.0%
● 18 to 20 years	423	3.9%	421	3.6%	444	3.6%
● 21 to 24 years	519	4.8%	552	4.7%	626	5.1%
● 25 to 29 years	844	7.8%	1,046	8.9%	856	7.0%
● 30 to 34 years	710	6.6%	784	6.7%	789	6.4%
● 35 to 39 years	816	7.5%	819	7.0%	773	6.3%
● 40 to 44 years	883	8.1%	857	7.3%	1,010	8.2%
● 45 to 49 years	826	7.6%	848	7.2%	834	6.8%
● 50 to 54 years	749	6.9%	864	7.4%	860	7.0%
▲ 55 to 59 years	662	6.1%	748	6.4%	850	6.9%
▲ 60 to 64 years	423	3.9%	573	4.9%	724	5.9%
● 65 to 69 years	454	4.2%	473	4.0%	581	4.7%
● 70 to 74 years	399	3.7%	398	3.4%	410	3.3%
▲ 75 to 84 years	303	2.8%	461	3.9%	543	4.4%
▲ 85 or more years	54	0.5%	97	0.8%	143	1.2%



CENSUS 2000

Coordinates: 39:35.11 84:19.46
Date: 3/24/2011

Prepared For:
New Jersey Presbyterian Church
780 Fairview Drive
Carlisle, OH 45005

Study Area Definition:
2.0 Mile Radius

Description	Study Area		U.S. Average	U.S. Comparative Index
	Number	Percent		
▲ Indicates the study area percentage is more than 1.2 times the U.S. average ↓ Indicates the study area percentage is less than 0.8 times the U.S. average				
MARITAL STATUS				
Marital Status All Persons 15 and Older	8,474			
↓ Single (Never Married)	1,566	18.5%	27.1%	68
Married	5,642	66.6%	56.5%	118
Divorced/Widowed	1,266	14.9%	16.4%	91
Marital Status Females 15 and Older	4,244			
↓ Single (Never Married)	640	15.1%	24.1%	63
▲ Married	2,860	67.4%	54.6%	123
Divorced/Widowed	744	17.5%	21.3%	82
Marital Status Males 15 and Older	4,230			
↓ Single (Never Married)	926	21.9%	30.3%	72
Married	2,782	65.8%	58.6%	112
Divorced/Widowed	522	12.3%	11.2%	110
FAMILY STRUCTURE				
Households By Type	4,048			
Single Male	363	9.0%	11.0%	82
↓ Single Female	390	9.6%	14.8%	65
▲ Married Couple	2,686	66.4%	52.5%	126
Other Family - Male Head of Household	146	3.6%	4.1%	88
↓ Other Family - Female Head of Household	332	8.2%	11.8%	69
↓ Non Family - Male Head of Household	73	1.8%	3.4%	53
↓ Non Family - Female Head of Household	58	1.4%	2.4%	60
Households With Children 0 to 18	1,537			
Married Couple Family	1,166	75.9%	68.9%	110
Other Family - Male Head of Household	106	6.9%	6.8%	102
↓ Other Family - Female Head of Household	249	16.2%	23.2%	70
Non Family	16	1.0%	1.1%	97
Population By Household Type	10,741			
Family Households	9,585	89.2%	82.2%	109
↓ Non Family Households	1,090	10.1%	15.0%	68
↓ Group Quarters	67	0.6%	2.8%	23

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GROUP QUARTERS				
Population In Group Quarters By Type	67			
Institutions	36	53.7%	52.2%	103
↓ College Dorm	0	0.0%	26.5%	0
↓ Military	0	0.0%	4.6%	0
Shelter/Street (category eliminated in 2000)	0	0.0%	0.0%	100
▲ Other	31	46.3%	16.7%	277
RACE/ETHNICITY				
Population By Race/Ethnicity	10,839			
▲ White (Non-Hispanic)	10,480	96.7%	69.1%	140
↓ African-American (Non-Hisp)	39	0.4%	12.0%	3
↓ Hispanic/Latino	143	1.3%	12.5%	11
↓ Native American (Non-Hisp)	36	0.3%	0.7%	45
↓ Asian (Non-Hisp)	28	0.3%	3.6%	7
▲ Hawaiian & Pacific Islander (Non-Hisp)	39	0.4%	0.1%	295
↓ Other Races & Multiple Races (Non-Hisp)	55	0.5%	1.9%	26
Asian Population By Race	28			
↓ Chinese	1	3.6%	22.6%	16
Japanese	2	7.1%	7.8%	92
Indian	4	14.3%	16.4%	87
▲ Korean	5	17.9%	10.5%	170
▲ Vietnamese	4	14.3%	11.0%	130
▲ Other Asian Races	12	42.9%	31.8%	135
Hispanic/Latino Population By Race	143			
↓ White	32	22.4%	47.8%	47
↓ African-American	0	0.0%	1.9%	0
↓ Native American	0	0.0%	1.0%	0
↓ Asian	0	0.0%	0.3%	0
▲ Other Races & Multiple Races	111	77.6%	49.0%	158
Hispanic/Latino Population By Origin	143			
↓ Mexican	38	26.6%	58.6%	45
↓ Puerto Rican	7	4.9%	9.7%	51
↓ Cuban	1	0.7%	3.5%	20
↓ Other Hispanic Origin	15	10.5%	28.4%	37

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EDUCATION				
Population By School Enrollment (Age 3 and over)	10,346			
Pre-Primary (Public)	227	2.2%	2.3%	96
Pre-Primary (Private)	116	1.1%	1.1%	104
Elementary/High School (Public)	1,674	16.2%	16.6%	97
Elementary/High School (Private)	82	0.8%	1.9%	41
Enrolled in College	260	2.5%	6.5%	39
Not Enrolled in School	7,986	77.2%	71.6%	108
Population By Education Completed (Age 25 and over)	7,123			
Elementary (Less than 9 years)	631	8.9%	7.5%	117
▲ Some High School (9 to 11 years)	1,081	15.2%	12.1%	126
▲ High School Graduate (12 years)	3,078	43.2%	28.6%	151
Some College (13 to 15 years)	1,411	19.8%	21.0%	94
Associate Degree	391	5.5%	6.3%	87
↓ Bachelor's Degree	401	5.6%	15.5%	36
↓ Graduate Degree	130	1.8%	8.9%	21
OCCUPATION				
Population By Occupation Type (Age 15 and over)	5,298			
↓ TOTAL WHITE COLLAR	2,370	44.7%	60.3%	74
↓ Executive and Managerial	369	7.0%	13.5%	52
↓ Professional Specialty	288	5.4%	10.7%	51
Technical Support	431	8.1%	9.5%	86
Sales	526	9.9%	11.2%	88
Administrative Support & Clerical	756	14.3%	15.4%	92
▲ TOTAL BLUE COLLAR	2,927	55.2%	39.7%	139
↓ Service: Private Households	110	2.1%	2.8%	74
↓ Service: Protective	38	0.7%	2.0%	36
▲ Service: Other	452	8.5%	6.8%	125
↓ Farming, Forestry & Fishing	3	0.1%	0.7%	8
▲ Precision Production and Craft	1,291	24.4%	12.4%	196
Operators and Assemblers	316	6.0%	5.5%	108
▲ Transportation and Material Moving	494	9.3%	6.1%	152
▲ Laborers	223	4.2%	3.3%	128

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EMPLOYMENT				
Population By Employment Status (Age 15 and over)	8,346			
Employed	5,298	63.5%	60.3%	105
Unemployed	158	1.9%	3.7%	52
Not in Labor Force	2,891	34.6%	36.1%	96
Households With Families By Number of Workers	3,164			
No Workers	444	14.0%	12.7%	111
1 Worker	852	26.9%	30.4%	89
2 Workers	1,511	47.8%	45.0%	106
3 or more Workers	357	11.3%	11.9%	95
Total Female Population By Work Status (Age 16 and over)	4,191			
TOTAL WORKING	2,449	58.4%	54.2%	108
With No Children	1,446	34.5%	33.8%	102
▲ With Children Age 0 to 5 only	239	5.7%	4.4%	129
With Children Age 6 to 17 only	555	13.2%	12.4%	107
▲ With Children Both Age 0 to 5 and 6 to 17	209	5.0%	3.6%	140
TOTAL NOT WORKING (UNEMPLOYED)	47	1.1%	3.3%	34
With No Children	35	0.8%	2.2%	38
With Children Age 0 to 5 only	2	0.0%	0.3%	14
With Children Age 6 to 17 only	1	0.0%	0.6%	4
With Children Both Age 0 to 5 and 6 to 17	9	0.2%	0.3%	82
TOTAL NOT IN THE LABOR FORCE	1,695	40.4%	42.5%	95
With No Children	1,341	32.0%	32.9%	97
With Children Age 0 to 5 only	75	1.8%	2.7%	65
With Children Age 6 to 17 only	207	4.9%	4.3%	115
With Children Both Age 0 to 5 and 6 to 17	72	1.7%	2.5%	68
POVERTY AND RETIREMENT INCOME				
Households By Poverty Status (\$17,603 for family of 4 in '00)	4,048			
Above Poverty Line (Householder Age 0 to 64)	3,060	75.6%	69.5%	109
Above Poverty Line (Householder Age 65 and over)	741	18.3%	18.7%	98
Below Poverty Line (Householder Age 0 to 64)	199	4.9%	9.4%	53
Below Poverty Line (Householder Age 65 and over)	47	1.2%	2.4%	48
Households By Presence of Retirement Income	4,048			
▲ With Retirement Income	969	23.9%	16.7%	143
Without Retirement Income	3,079	76.1%	83.3%	91

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HOUSING				
Occupied Units By Type	4,016			
Owner Occupied	3,098	77.1%	66.2%	117
▼ Renter Occupied	917	22.8%	33.8%	68
▼ Median Rent	\$513		\$657	78
Vacant Units By Type	172			
▲ For Rent	95	55.2%	25.7%	215
▲ For Sale	46	26.7%	13.7%	196
▼ Seasonal	17	9.9%	37.1%	27
▼ Other	15	8.7%	23.5%	37
Structures By Number of Units	4,188			
▲ Single Unit	3,485	83.2%	65.8%	126
▼ 2 to 9 Units	400	9.6%	13.7%	70
▲ 10 to 19 Units	239	5.7%	4.0%	143
▼ 20 to 49 Units	16	0.4%	3.3%	11
▼ 50 or more Units	0	0.0%	5.3%	0
▼ Mobile Home	48	1.1%	7.6%	15
▼ Other	0	0.0%	0.2%	0
▲ Single To Multiple Unit Ratio	5.32		2.50	213
2000 Owner-Occupied Property Values	2,900			
▼ Under \$25,000	1	0.0%	2.4%	1
▼ \$25,000 to \$49,999	58	2.0%	7.5%	27
▲ \$50,000 to \$74,999	669	23.1%	16.3%	141
▲ \$75,000 to \$99,999	676	23.3%	14.1%	166
▲ \$100,000 to \$149,999	1,132	39.0%	23.7%	164
▼ \$150,000 to \$199,999	325	11.2%	14.6%	77
▼ \$200,000 to \$299,999	24	0.8%	11.9%	7
▼ \$300,000 to \$399,999	15	0.5%	4.4%	12
▼ \$400,000 to \$499,999	0	0.0%	2.1%	0
▼ \$500,000 and over	0	0.0%	2.9%	0
2000 Median Property Value	\$107,766		\$158,934	68

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HOUSING (CONTINUED)				
Housing Units By Year Built	4,188			
▼ 1995 to 2000	293	7.0%	9.7%	72
▼ 1990 to 1994	126	3.0%	7.3%	41
▼ 1980 to 1989	191	4.6%	15.8%	29
1970 to 1979	787	18.8%	18.5%	102
▲ 1960 to 1969	957	22.9%	13.7%	166
▲ 1950 to 1959	825	19.7%	12.7%	155
▲ 1940 to 1949	415	9.9%	7.3%	136
1939 or earlier	593	14.2%	15.0%	94
Households By Number of Persons	4,048			
▼ 1 Person Household	753	18.6%	25.8%	72
2 Person Household	1,512	37.4%	32.5%	115
3 Person Household	699	17.3%	16.5%	105
▲ 4 Person Household	703	17.4%	14.3%	122
5 Person Household	257	6.3%	6.7%	95
▼ 6 Person Household	84	2.1%	2.7%	78
▼ 7 or more Person Household	40	1.0%	1.7%	59
Average Persons Per Household	2.7		2.6	103
Population By Urban/Rural	10,839			
Urban	10,163	93.8%	79.0%	119
▼ Rural	676	6.2%	21.0%	30
Households By Heating Type	4,016			
Utility Gas	2,392	59.6%	51.2%	116
▼ Other Gas	172	4.3%	6.5%	66
▼ Electric	934	23.3%	30.3%	77
▲ Oil	465	11.6%	9.0%	129
▼ Coal	0	0.0%	0.1%	0
▼ Wood	23	0.6%	1.7%	34
▲ Solar/Other Fuel	27	0.7%	0.4%	154
▼ No Fuel Used	2	0.0%	0.7%	7
Households By Presence of Telephone	4,016			
With Telephone	3,950	98.4%	97.6%	101
▼ Without Telephone	66	1.6%	2.4%	67

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TRANSPORTATION				
Households By Number of Vehicles	4,016			
▼ No Vehicles	190	4.7%	10.3%	46
▼ 1 Vehicle	1,011	25.2%	34.2%	74
2 Vehicle	1,819	45.3%	38.4%	118
▲ 3 or more Vehicles	996	24.8%	17.1%	145
Workers By Travel Time to Work	5,115			
▼ Work At Home	94	1.8%	3.4%	55
Less than 10 minutes	620	12.1%	14.4%	84
10 to 29 minutes	2,930	57.3%	51.1%	112
30 to 59 minutes	1,295	25.3%	26.5%	95
▼ 60 to 89 minutes	103	2.0%	5.2%	39
90 or more minutes	165	3.2%	2.8%	117
Average Travel Time to Work (minutes)	25.2		25.5	99
Workers By Type of Transportation to Work	5,209			
Drive Alone	4,394	84.4%	75.7%	111
Car Pool	598	11.5%	12.2%	94
▼ Public Transportation	8	0.2%	4.7%	3
▼ Motorcycle	0	0.0%	0.5%	0
▼ Walk to Work	73	1.4%	2.9%	48
Other Means	41	0.8%	0.7%	112
▼ Work at Home	94	1.8%	3.3%	55


U.S. Lifestyles™

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SEGMENT GROUPS

No.	Group Name Please see accompanying guide for a complete description of each segment Groups are sorted by number of households in study area	Study Area		U.S.	
		Households	Percent.	U.S. Average	Comparative Index
2	Middle American Families (9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 23, 25 and 28)	3,141	70.9%	31.4%	226
4	Rural Families (27, 26, 29, 53, 35 and 38)	492	11.1%	13.1%	85
5	Senior Life (7, 20, 21, 22, 30 and 31)	405	9.1%	6.9%	132
6	Ethnic And Urban Diversity (24, 32, 36, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46 and 48)	363	8.2%	18.4%	45
3	Young And Coming (8, 12, 13, 15, 19, 34, 37, 39 and 47)	8	0.2%	14.7%	1
1	Affluent Families (segments 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 14)	7	0.2%	15.1%	1

INDIVIDUAL SEGMENTS

No.	Segment Name Segments are sorted by number of households in the study area	Study Area		U.S.	
		Households	Percent.	U.S. Average	Comparative Index
11	Young Suburban Families	1,463	33.0%	3.0%	1112
18	Working Urban Families	1,077	24.3%	4.0%	613
35	Laboring Country Families	398	9.0%	2.7%	327
40	Surviving Urban Diversity	358	8.1%	4.0%	200
22	Mature and Established	300	6.8%	1.8%	378
25	Working Country Consumers	289	6.5%	4.1%	159
28	Building Country Families	180	4.1%	2.8%	145
16	Established Country Families	87	2.0%	6.4%	31
20	Cautious and Mature	66	1.5%	2.6%	56
29	Working Country Families	47	1.1%	1.0%	110
17	Large Young Families	45	1.0%	2.2%	47
38	Rural Working Families	29	0.7%	8.8%	7
7	Prosperous and Mature	22	0.5%	0.5%	92
26	Working Suburban Families	13	0.3%	0.1%	246
31	Mature Country Families	10	0.2%	0.5%	42
21	Mature and Stable	7	0.2%	0.6%	28
49	Exception Households	7	0.2%	0.2%	63
15	Reliable Young Starters	6	0.1%	4.3%	3
27	Country Family Diversity	5	0.1%	0.3%	33
4	Educated Mid-Life Families	4	0.1%	3.4%	3



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No.	Individual Segment Name Segments are sorted by number of households in the study area.	Study Area		U.S. Average	U.S. Comparative Index
		Households	Percent.		
43	Laboring Urban Diversity	4	0.1%	0.5%	18
14	Secure Mid-Life Families	3	0.1%	0.7%	10
8	Rising Potential Professionals	2	0.0%	2.3%	2
44	Laboring Urban Life	1	0.0%	0.1%	30
10	Suburban Mid-Life Families	0	0.0%	5.5%	0
1	Traditional Affluent Families	0	0.0%	3.5%	0
23	Established Empty-Nesters	0	0.0%	3.4%	0
5	Prosperous Diversity	0	0.0%	3.1%	0
12	Educated New Starters	0	0.0%	2.9%	0
39	New Beginning Urbanites	0	0.0%	2.8%	0
24	Metro Multi-Ethnic Diversity	0	0.0%	2.7%	0
46	Struggling Black Households	0	0.0%	2.5%	0
45	Struggling Urban Diversity	0	0.0%	2.5%	0
6	Prosperous New Country Families	0	0.0%	2.1%	0
32	Working Urban Life	0	0.0%	1.7%	0
41	Struggling Hispanic Households	0	0.0%	1.6%	0
3	Mid-Life Prosperity	0	0.0%	1.5%	0
42	Laboring Rural Diversity	0	0.0%	1.5%	0
30	Urban Senior Life	0	0.0%	0.8%	0
48	Struggling Urban Life	0	0.0%	0.8%	0
2	Professional Affluent Families	0	0.0%	0.8%	0
47	University Life	0	0.0%	0.8%	0
34	College and Career Starters	0	0.0%	0.6%	0
37	Rising Multi-Ethnic Urbanites	0	0.0%	0.6%	0
36	Working Diverse Urbanites	0	0.0%	0.4%	0
13	Affluent Educational Urbanites	0	0.0%	0.4%	0
50	Unclassified Households	0	0.0%	0.2%	0
33	Laboring Rural Families	0	0.0%	0.1%	0
9	Educated Working Families	0	0.0%	0.1%	0
19	Educated and Promising	0	0.0%	0.1%	0
TOTALS		4,423	100.0%	100.0%	100



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FAITH INVOLVEMENT INDICATOR			
Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Be:			
Strongly Involved with Their Faith	33.4%	35.4%	94
Somewhat Involved with Their Faith	31.4%	29.9%	105
Not Involved with Their Faith	35.0%	34.7%	101
Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Have:			
Increased Their Involvement with Their Faith in the Last 10 Years	23.9%	22.1%	108
Decreased Their Involvement with Their Faith in the Last 10 Years	25.6%	23.7%	108
RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE INDICATOR			
Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Prefer:			
↓ Adventist	0.2%	0.5%	45
↓ Baptist	11.1%	16.1%	69
▲ Catholic	30.3%	23.7%	128
▲ Congregational	2.5%	2.0%	127
Eastern Religions (Buddhist/Hindu/Shinto/Islam)	0.5%	0.4%	107
↓ Episcopal	1.5%	2.9%	52
▲ Holiness	0.9%	0.8%	114
↓ Jehovah's Witnesses	0.9%	1.1%	86
↓ Judaism	1.0%	3.2%	33
▲ Lutheran	9.2%	7.2%	127
▲ Methodist	11.6%	10.1%	115
↓ Mormon	0.5%	1.8%	26
↓ New Age	0.3%	0.6%	56
Non-Denominational / Independent	6.7%	6.9%	96
↓ Orthodox	0.2%	0.3%	50
↓ Pentecostal	1.9%	2.4%	76
▲ Presbyterian / Reformed	5.7%	4.6%	125
↓ Unitarian / Universalist	0.6%	0.7%	86
Interested but No Preference	3.9%	3.9%	101
Not Interested and No Preference	10.8%	11.1%	97
Likely to Have Changed Their Preference in the Last 10 Years	17.5%	16.8%	104
LEADERSHIP PREFERENCE INDICATOR			
Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Prefer A Leader Who:			
↓ Tells them what to do	3.5%	4.0%	88
Lets them do what they want and is supportive	11.7%	11.7%	100
↓ Lets them do what they want and stays out of the way	3.9%	4.8%	81
Works with them on deciding what to do and helps them do it	80.9%	79.6%	102



Coordinates: 39.35.11 84.19.46
Date: 3/24/2011

Prepared For:
New Jersey Presbyterian Church
780 Fairview Drive
Carlisle, OH 45005

Study Area Definition:
2.0 Mile Radius

Description	Study Area	U.S. Average	U.S. Comparative Index
▲ Indicates the study area percentage is more than 1.1 times the U.S. average			
● Indicates the study area percentage is less than 0.9 times the U.S. average			
PRIMARY CONCERN INDICATOR			
Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Be Primarily Concerned With:			
THE BASICS:			
Maintaining Personal Health	42.9%	43.5%	99
Finding/Providing Health Insurance	27.9%	29.0%	96
Day-to-Day Financial Worries	30.2%	31.6%	96
Finding Employment Opportunities	14.8%	14.4%	102
Finding Affordable Housing	9.4%	11.3%	83
Providing Adequate Food	9.0%	8.6%	105
▲ Finding Child Care	8.7%	6.3%	139
FAMILY PROBLEMS:			
Dealing With Alcohol/Drug Abuse	17.4%	16.7%	104
Dealing With Teen / Child Problems	22.1%	20.7%	107
Finding/Providing Aging Parent Care	16.7%	15.5%	108
Dealing With Abusive Relationships	10.4%	11.4%	91
▲ Dealing With Divorce	5.4%	4.5%	120
COMMUNITY PROBLEMS:			
● Neighborhood Crime and Safety	21.8%	27.0%	81
▲ Finding/Providing Good Schools	27.2%	23.5%	116
Dealing with Problems in Schools	12.5%	13.6%	92
● Dealing With Racial / Ethnic Prejudice	9.7%	13.1%	74
● Dealing With Neighborhood Gangs	6.8%	8.5%	80
● Dealing with Social Injustice	8.8%	11.3%	78
HOPES AND DREAMS:			
Achieving Long-term Financial Security	49.7%	50.6%	98
▲ Finding Time for Recreation / Leisure	28.2%	25.3%	111
Finding Better Quality Healthcare	23.4%	23.9%	98
Finding A Satisfying Job / Career	19.8%	19.3%	102
Finding Retirement Opportunities	18.8%	18.9%	100
▲ Achieving A Fulfilling Marriage	25.9%	22.3%	116
▲ Developing Parenting Skills	17.1%	14.7%	116
Achieving Educational Objectives	7.7%	7.5%	103
SPIRITUAL / PERSONAL:			
▲ Dealing With Stress	34.8%	29.8%	117
● Finding Companionship	15.0%	17.3%	87
Finding A Good Church	14.4%	15.2%	95
Finding Spiritual Teaching	11.8%	12.9%	91
Finding Life Direction	13.9%	14.0%	99



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KEY VALUES INDICATOR

Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Agree With the Following Statements:

GOD:

"I believe there is a God"	87.9%	84.5%	104
"God is actively involved in the world including nations and their governments"	68.0%	63.8%	107

SOCIETY:

"It is important to preserve the traditional American family structure"	93.8%	91.5%	103
"A healthy environment has become a national crisis"	81.8%	82.8%	99
"Public education is essential to the future of American society"	93.8%	94.0%	100

INSTITUTIONAL ROLES:

"Government should be the primary provider of human welfare services"	50.4%	50.1%	101
"The role of Churches / Synagogues is to help form and support moral values"	82.2%	81.1%	101
"Churches and religious organizations should provide more human services"	61.8%	62.6%	99

RACIAL / ETHNIC CHANGE:

"The United States must open its doors to all people groups"	33.2%	36.3%	91
"The changing racial / ethnic face of America is a threat to our national heritage"	38.6%	36.3%	106

HOUSEHOLD CONTRIBUTION INDICATOR

Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Contribute:

TO CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS:

More than \$100 per year	60.7%	59.8%	102
More than \$500 per year	30.9%	31.2%	99
More than \$1,000 per year	16.3%	17.4%	94

TO CHARITIES:

More than \$100 per year	31.4%	33.7%	93
More than \$500 per year	4.0%	6.8%	59
More than \$1,000 per year	1.2%	2.3%	52

TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES:

More than \$100 per year	11.5%	16.1%	71
More than \$500 per year	3.0%	4.3%	70
More than \$1,000 per year	1.4%	2.2%	64



New Jersey Presbyterian Church
780 Fairview Drive
Carlisle, OH 45005

Study Area Definition:
2.0 Mile Radius



ID# 236296:236296



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780 Fairview Drive
Carlisle, OH 45005

Study Area Definition:
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Ministry Area Profile 2010
Compass
REPORT

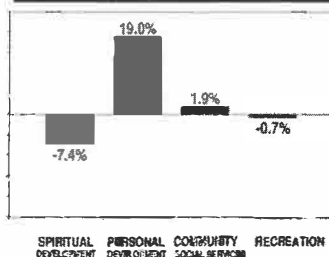
FingerPrint
Your Area Compared To The U.S.

Coordinates: 39:35.11 84:19.46
Date: 3/24/2011

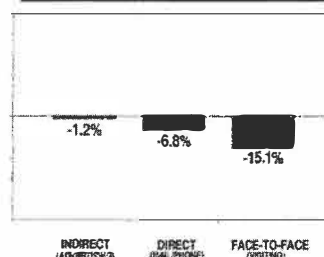
Prepared For:
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780 Fairview Drive
Carlisle, OH 45005

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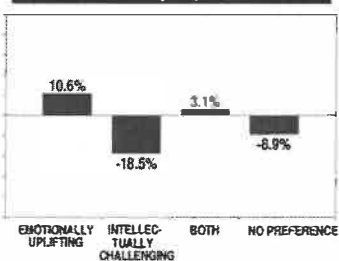
Church Program Preferences



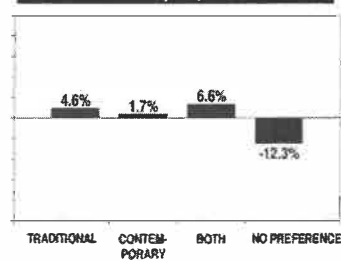
Contact Methods Rated Good



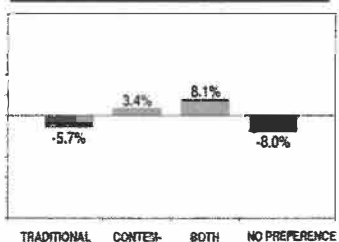
Worship Style (1)



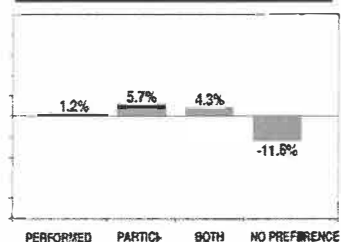
Worship Style (2)



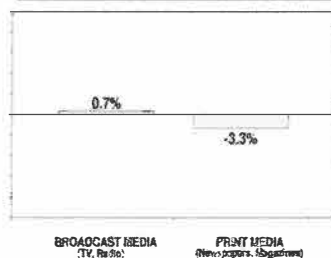
Music Style (1)



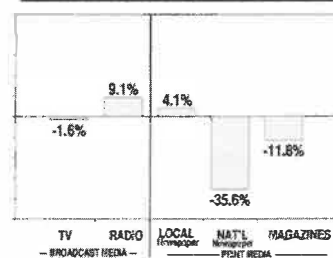
Music Style (2)



Primary Media Summary



Primary Media Preferences





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Program

Coordinates: 39:35.11 84:19.46
Date: 3/24/2011

Prepared For:
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Carlisle, OH 45005

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CHURCH PROGRAM PREFERENCE INDICATOR

Estimated 2010 Households If Looking for a New Church Likely to Express as Most Important:

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT:

Bible Study Discussion and Prayer Groups	37.9%	41.1%	92
Adult Theological Discussion Groups	20.4%	22.5%	91
Spiritual Retreats	11.4%	11.6%	98

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT:

▲ Marriage Enrichment Opportunities	18.7%	15.2%	123
Parent Training Programs	7.9%	7.8%	102
▲ Twelve Step Programs	4.1%	3.5%	119
▲ Divorce Recovery	3.7%	2.4%	151

COMMUNITY/SOCIAL SERVICES:

Personal or Family Counseling	23.7%	22.5%	106
↓ Care for the Terminally Ill	14.0%	15.7%	89
Food and Clothing Resources	10.8%	11.1%	97
Day Care Services	6.5%	6.1%	106
▲ Church Sponsored Day-School	7.3%	5.7%	128

RECREATION:

Youth Social Programs	32.1%	29.7%	108
▲ Family Activities and Outings	36.4%	32.8%	111
↓ Active Retirement Programs	23.5%	26.8%	88
↓ Cultural Programs (Music, Drama, Art)	14.9%	18.9%	79
Sports or Camping	6.9%	6.3%	109

SUMMARY

Spiritual Development Index	93
▲ Personal Development Index	119
Community/Social Services Index	102
Recreation Index	99



Ministry Area Profile 2010
Compass
REPORT

Style

Coordinates: 39:35.11 84:19.46
Date: 3/24/2011

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Carlisle, OH 45005

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WORSHIP STYLE INDICATOR

Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Prefer Church Worship which is:

PART 1:

▲ A. Emotionally Uplifting	29.1%	26.4%	111
B. Intellectually Challenging	9.1%	11.1%	82
C. Both A and B	40.4%	39.2%	103
D. No Preference or Not Interested	21.3%	23.4%	91

PART 2:

A. Traditional/Formal/Ceremonial	21.2%	20.2%	105
B. Contemporary/Informal	26.8%	26.3%	102
C. Both A and B	28.3%	26.5%	107
D. No Preference or Not Interested	23.6%	26.9%	88

MUSIC STYLE INDICATOR

Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Prefer Church Music which is:

PART 1:

A. Traditional	23.0%	24.4%	94
B. Contemporary	20.4%	19.7%	103
C. Both A and B	33.6%	31.1%	108
D. No Preference or Not Interested	22.8%	24.8%	92

PART 2:

A. Performed by Others	18.9%	18.7%	101
B. Participatory	24.2%	22.9%	106
C. Both A and B	33.6%	32.2%	104
D. No Preference or Not Interested	23.2%	26.2%	88



Ministry Area Profile 2010 Compass REPORT

Style

Coordinates: 39:35.11 84:19.46
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Carlisle, OH 45005

Study Area Definition:
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MISSION EMPHASIS INDICATOR

Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Prefer Church Involvement and Mission Emphasis Focused On:

PART 1:

A. Community	22.0%	22.0%	100
B. Personal Spiritual Development	14.4%	14.3%	100
C. Both A and B	40.5%	37.4%	108
D. No Preference or Not Interested	23.1%	26.3%	88

PART 2:

A. Global Mission	6.0%	6.2%	97
B. Local Mission	36.1%	33.3%	108
C. Both A and B	32.4%	30.1%	108
D. No Preference or Not Interested	25.5%	30.4%	84

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE INDICATOR

Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Prefer Church Architecture which is:

PART 1:

A. Traditional	26.7%	26.6%	100
B. Contemporary	16.2%	15.9%	101
C. Both A and B	34.7%	32.3%	107
D. No Preference or Not Interested	22.4%	25.1%	89

PART 2:

A. Somber/Serious	8.7%	9.4%	93
B. Light and Airy	35.5%	34.7%	102
C. Both A and B	30.4%	27.7%	110
D. No Preference or Not Interested	25.4%	28.2%	90



Ministry Area Profile 2010
Compass
REPORT

Communication

Coordinates: 39:35.11 84:19.46
Date: 3-24-2011

Prepared For:
New Jersey Presbyterian Church
780 Fairview Drive
Carlisle, OH 45005

Study Area Definition:
2.0 Mile Radius

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PRIMARY MEDIA PREFERENCE

Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Describe Their Primary Media Information Source As:

BROADCAST MEDIA:

Television	46.5%	47.3%	98
Radio	14.5%	13.3%	109

PRINT MEDIA:

Local Newspaper	36.7%	36.1%	102
National Newspaper	2.8%	4.3%	64
Magazines	2.0%	2.4%	81

SECONDARY MEDIA PREFERENCE

Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Describe Their Secondary Media Information Source As:

BROADCAST MEDIA:

Television	34.2%	31.9%	107
Radio	23.7%	23.8%	100

PRINT MEDIA:

Local Newspaper	34.0%	32.7%	104
National Newspaper	3.9%	5.8%	67
Magazines	6.2%	7.0%	88

SUMMARY

Overall Broadcast Media Index (100 = Average)	102
Overall Print Media Index	97



Ministry Area Profile 2010
Compass
REPORT

Communication

Coordinates: 39:35.11 84:19.46
Date: 3/24/2011

Prepared For:
New Jersey Presbyterian Church
780 Fairview Drive
Catskill, OH 45005

Study Area Definition:
2.0 Mile Radius

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↓ Indicates the study area percentage is less than 0.9 times the U.S. average			
CHURCH CONTACT METHODS RATED GOOD			

Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Rate As Good the Following Methods of Contact from a Church:

INDIRECT METHODS (LEAST PERSONAL):

Local Radio Announcements or Advertisements	34.8%	36.2%	96
Putting Ad in Local Newspaper	35.4%	33.8%	104
Local Cable Channels	29.1%	30.4%	96

DIRECT METHODS (MORE PERSONAL):

Sending Information By Mail	53.4%	53.7%	99
Calling and Offering to Send Information By Mail	24.7%	29.5%	84
Calling and Discussing on the Phone	10.7%	12.0%	89

FACE-TO-FACE METHODS (VERY PERSONAL):

Calling and Offering to Visit When Convenient	17.3%	20.1%	86
Going Door to Door	11.6%	14.0%	83

CHURCH CONTACT METHODS RATED POOR

Estimated 2010 Households Likely to Rate As Poor the Following Methods of Contact from a Church:

INDIRECT METHODS (LEAST PERSONAL):

Local Radio Announcements or Advertisements	18.0%	19.6%	92
Putting Ad in Local Newspaper	21.1%	21.5%	98
Local Cable Channels	29.9%	30.7%	97

DIRECT METHODS (MORE PERSONAL):

Sending Information By Mail	12.9%	13.3%	97
Calling and Offering to Send Information By Mail	35.9%	34.0%	105
Calling and Discussing on the Phone	65.2%	60.6%	107

FACE-TO-FACE METHODS (VERY PERSONAL):

Calling and Offering to Visit When Convenient	53.6%	49.6%	108
Going Door to Door	67.0%	64.0%	105

SUMMARY OF METHODS RATED GOOD	
Indirect Methods Index (100 = Average)	99
Direct Methods Index	93
Face-to-Face Methods Index	85

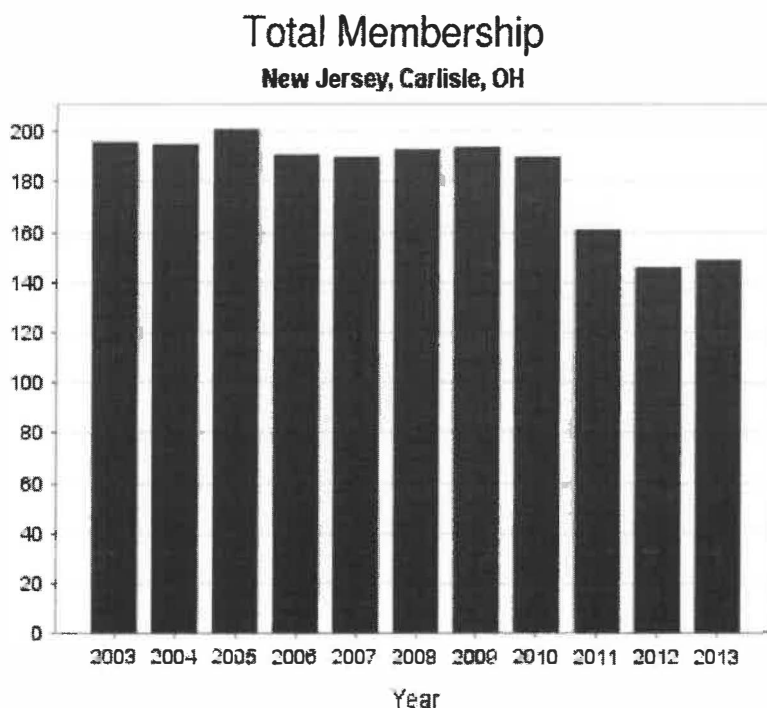
SUMMARY OF METHODS RATED POOR	
Indirect Methods Index	96
Direct Methods Index	105
Face-to-Face Methods Index	106

APPENDIX B

CHURCH DEMOGRAPHICS: TEN YEAR TRENDS

Ten-Year Trends

Research Services



Your congregation's reported total membership, 149, was less than the 2013 PC(USA) average, 175.

The chart above shows the number of members in your congregation for the years 2003 through 2013. Membership for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its predecessor denominations (the UPCUSA and the PCUS) peaked in the early 1960s, then began a steady, slow decline. From 2003 to 2013, PC(USA) membership has declined by about 2.2% annually. In general, smaller-membership congregations (less than 250 members) were more likely to experience net losses in the last ten years and larger-membership congregations (more than 250 members) were more likely to experience net gains. Nonetheless, a majority of all congregations (including larger-membership congregations) experienced net losses over this period.

Changes in membership result from the difference between new members added (membership gains) and current members subtracted (membership losses). The overall trend since 2003 has been one of declining gains. Since 2003, certificate and other losses have decreased more substantially than losses due to death. The total number of PC(USA) members lost each year has been declining in the last 10 years but the trend has not been sufficient to make up for the greater yearly decline in membership gains.

The average Presbyterian Church has 175 members (the mean in 2013). About 32% of the total congregations report between 1 and 50 members. Another 23% report between 51 and 100 members.

Most PC(USA) members are white (91.3%). Three new racial-ethnic categories were added: African, African American and Middle Eastern. The racial-ethnic breakdown is: Asian (2.8%), Hispanic (1.5%), Native Americans (0.2%), Black (1.1%), African American (2.1%), African (0.5%), Middle Eastern (0.1%) and Others (0.4%). Despite changes in the total membership of the PC(USA), the percentage of racial-ethnic minority members has stayed about the same since 2003. The ratio of female members (58%) to male members (42%) has also remained stable since the mid-1960s.

Key Questions:

- Is your congregation larger or smaller than the average PC(USA) congregation?
- How does the percentage increase or decrease in membership of your congregation compare to that of the denomination as a whole?
- What factors in your congregation help explain the membership trends in your congregation?
- What factors in the community are relevant to your membership trends?
- What will be your congregation's strategy to increase its membership?

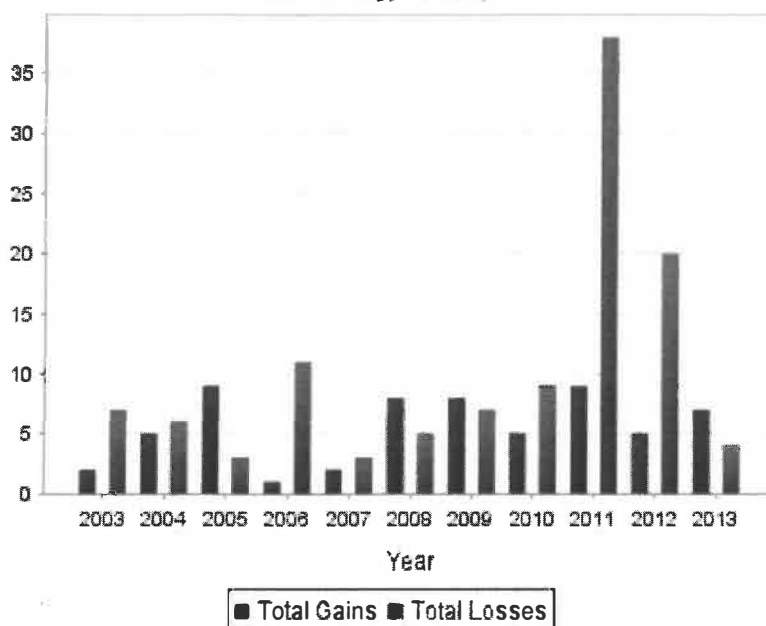
Note 1. Membership numbers and other statistics for congregations affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and one or more other denominations reflect only portions of the actual totals.

Note 2: "0" may indicate values of zero, missing data, or data "not reported."

Source: Comparative Statistics, annual editions 2003-2013, Presbyterian Research Services.

Total Gains and Losses

New Jersey, Carlisle, OH



Your congregation's reported total gains in membership, 7, were less than the 2013 average for all PC(USA) congregations, 12. The reported total losses, 4, were less than the 2013 PC(USA) average, 22.

The chart above shows the total gains and total losses in membership reported by your congregation for the most recent ten years. The total number of PC(USA) members lost each year has been declining in the last ten years, but the trend has not been sufficient to make up for the greater yearly decline in membership gains.

Total Gains in membership is the number derived by adding gains through: Profession of Faith, Reaffirmation and Restoration (the number of persons received during the year through professions of faith, reaffirmation, and restoration after removal, deletion, or temporary exclusion); Certificate (persons received into membership upon receipt of a certificate of transfer from another church); and Other (all other additions to the active roll).

Total Losses in membership is the number derived by adding membership losses through: Certificate (persons received by other churches for whom certificates of transfer have been issued); Death (members whose names have been deleted because of death); and Other (all other persons whose names have been removed from the active membership roll through transfer from the active to the inactive roll, deletion from the active roll for any other reason, or temporary exclusion or removal from the active roll).

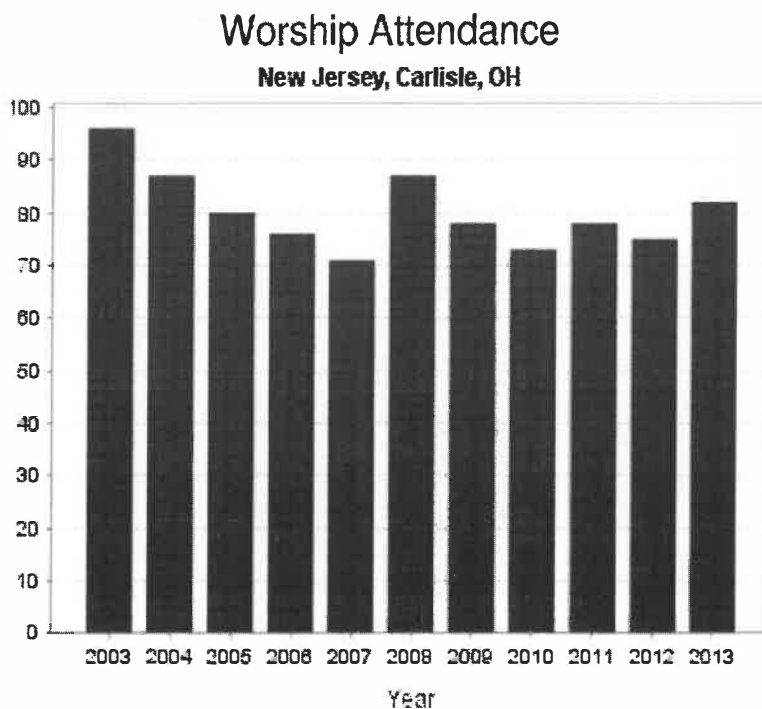
Key Questions:

- What is the relationship between total losses and total gains in your congregation?
- Have membership gains been large enough to offset membership losses? What type of gains are characteristic of your congregation (e.g., Profession of Faith, Reaffirmation)?
- What type of losses are characteristic of your congregation (e.g., transfers, deaths)?
- What steps can your congregation take to increase membership gains and to decrease membership losses?

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Source: Comparative Statistics, annual editions 2003-2013, Presbyterian Research Services.



Your congregation's reported worship attendance, 82, was less than the 2013 PC(USA) average, 97.

The chart above shows the average worship attendance in your congregation for each year since 2003. The average (mean) worship attendance for all Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations is 97 persons. This number is typical for American Protestant congregations, most of which average between 60 and 120 worshipers each Sunday. While membership in the PC(USA) has declined in the last ten years, the average worship attendance has remained relatively stable.

Smaller-membership churches tend to have a higher percentage of their members attending worship services than larger-membership churches. Low relative worship attendance -- defined as average attendance that is less than 51% of the congregation's total membership -- is about twice as common in larger-membership congregations (more than 250 members) as in smaller-membership congregations.

Key Questions:

- Is your congregation's worship attendance increasing or decreasing?
- What is the ratio of your worship attendance to your membership (i.e., is it above or below the current average of 50%)?
- How would you describe the people who regularly attend worship services?

- Is your worship style effective with younger generations (persons born after 1955), with new immigrant populations, or with other specific populations in your area?

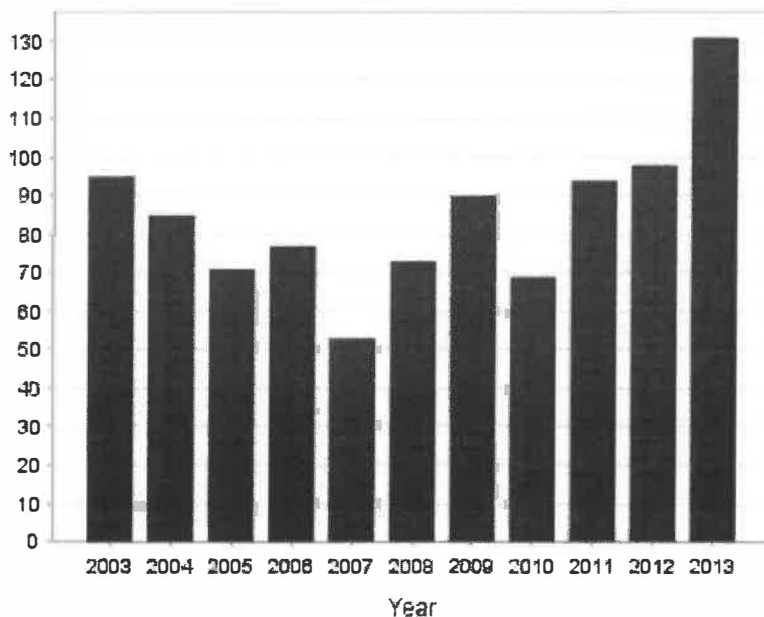
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Source: Comparative Statistics, annual editions 2003-2013, Presbyterian Research Services.

Christian Education Enrollment

New Jersey, Carlisle, OH



Your congregation's reported Christian education enrollment, 131, was larger than the 2013 PC(USA) average, 99.

The chart above shows the average number of persons in your congregation enrolled in Christian education for the most recent 10 years. The total Christian education enrollment for all PC(USA) congregations has been stable during the last 10 years. Most PC(USA) congregations, regardless of size, report Christian education enrollment that is less than 50% of their congregation's total membership. In smaller-membership congregations, Christian education enrollment is a larger percentage of the membership than in larger-membership congregations.

Key Questions:

- How would you describe the trend in your congregation's Christian education enrollment?
- What is the ratio of your congregation's Christian education enrollment to its membership (the number of persons participating in Christian education divided by total membership)?
- Is this percentage increasing or decreasing?
- How does the changing age and/or family profile of your congregation relate to your congregation's Christian education trends?
- How many new Christian education classes have been organized in the last two years?

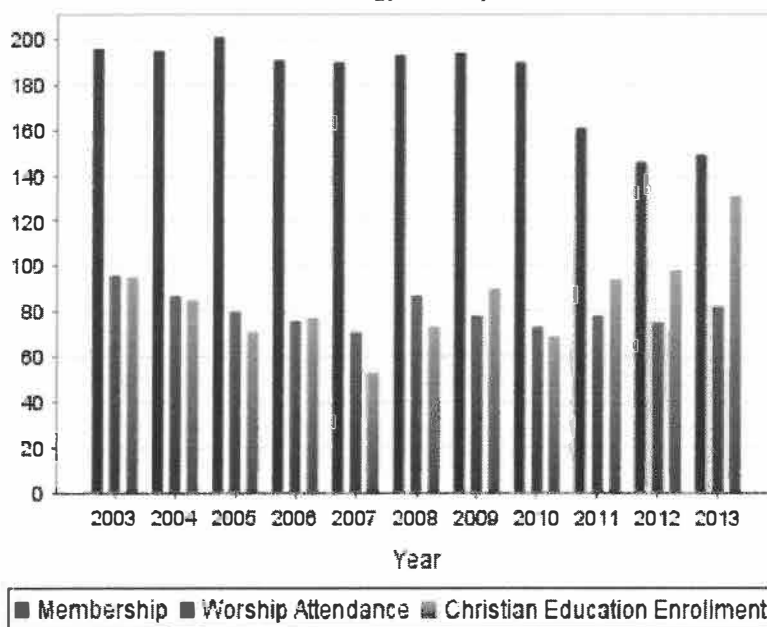
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Note 2: "0" may indicate values of zero, missing data, or data "not reported."

Source: Comparative Statistics, annual editions 2003-2013, Presbyterian Research Services.

Membership, Worship Attendance and Christian Education Enrollment

New Jersey, Carlisle, OH



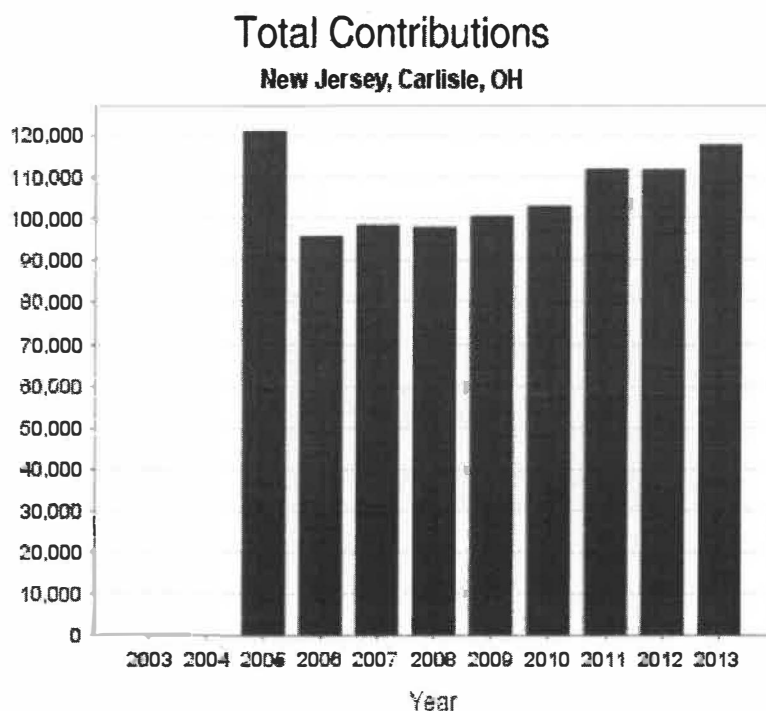
Your congregation's reported total membership, 149, was less than the 2013 average (mean) for all PC(USA) congregations, 175. The reported average worship attendance, 82, was less than the 2013 PC(USA) average (mean), 97. The reported enrollment in Christian education, 131, was larger than the 2013 PC(USA) average (mean) of 99.

The chart above shows the number of members, worship attendance, and Christian education enrollment for the most recent 10 years.

Note 1: Membership numbers and other statistics for congregations affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and one or more other denominations reflect only portions of the actual totals.

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Source: Comparative Statistics, annual editions 2003-2013, Presbyterian Research Services.



Your congregation's reported total contributions, \$117,631, were less than the 2013 PC(USA) average, \$243,563.

The chart above shows the total contributions to your congregation for the most recent 10 years. Contributions are all monies received by all treasurers of organizations in the church, including payments on pledges, loose offerings and special offerings.

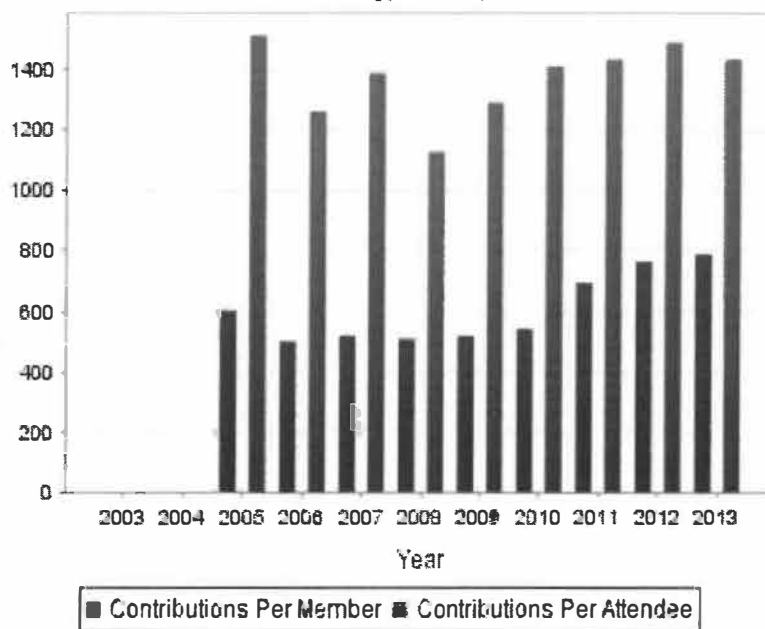
Note 1: Membership numbers and other statistics for congregations affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and one or more other denominations reflect only portions of the actual totals.

Note 2: "0" may indicate values of zero, missing data, or data "not reported."

Source: Comparative Statistics, annual editions 2003-2013. Presbyterian Research Services.

Contributions per Person

New Jersey, Carlisle, OH



Your congregation's reported average contribution per member, \$789, was less than the 2013 average for all PC(USA) congregations, \$1,221.75. The reported average contribution per worship attendee, \$1,434, was less than the 2013 PC(USA) average, \$2,462.24.

First, the chart displays the average contribution per member for the last 10 years. Contributions are all monies received by all treasurers of organizations in the church, including payments on pledges, loose offerings and special offerings. Among all Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations the average contribution in 2013 per member was \$1,222. In general, per-member contributions are larger in larger-membership congregations and smaller in the smaller-membership congregations. Second, the average contribution per worshiper was also calculated. Some experts recommend the latter statistic because it reflects a more accurate picture of the giving level of the active members of the church. Generally, the average contribution per worshiper is the higher number. Among all PC(USA) congregations, average contributions per worshiper were \$2,462 in 2013.

Key Questions:

- What are the significant trends in your congregation's contributions?
- Given this era of intergenerational transfer of wealth, how can your congregation increase the number of bequests?

- What factors are influencing the congregation's investment income?
- What is the level of your congregation's giving to mission?
- Has mission giving increased or decreased as a percentage of all contributions or expenditures?

Note 1: Membership numbers and other statistics for congregations affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and one or more other denominations reflect only portions of the actual totals.

Note 2: "0" may indicate values of zero, missing data, or data "not reported."

Source: Comparative Statistics, annual editions 2003-2013, Presbyterian Research Services.

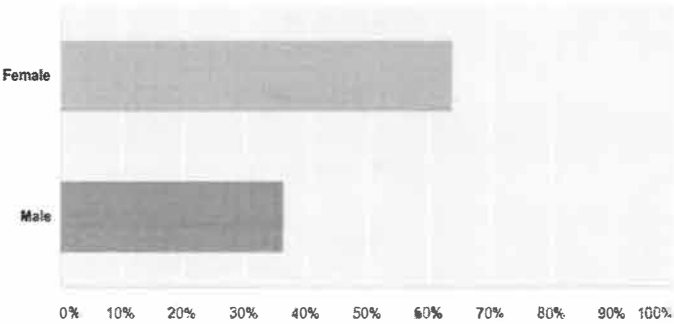
APPENDIX C: PRE AND POST SURVEY

Dmin project outcome

SurveyMonkey

Q1 What is your gender?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



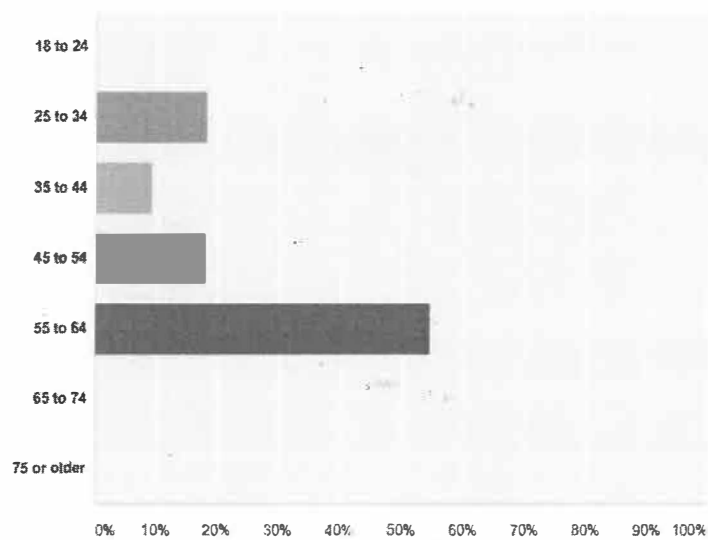
Answer Choices	Responses
Female	64.64% 7
Male	36.36% 4
Total	11

Dmin project outcome

SurveyMonkey

Q2 What is your age?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



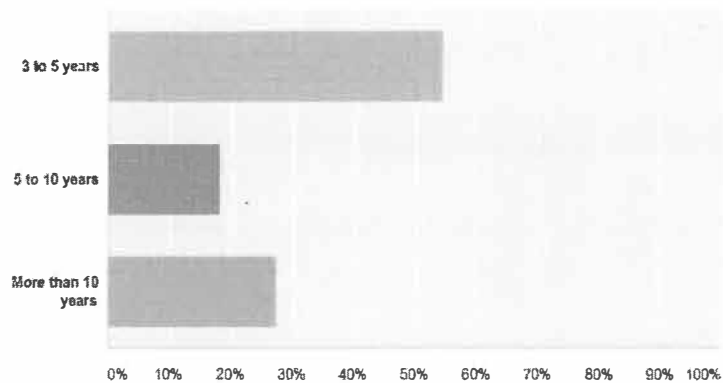
Answer Choices	Responses	
18 to 24	0.00%	0
25 to 34	18.18%	2
35 to 44	9.09%	1
45 to 54	18.18%	2
55 to 64	54.55%	6
65 to 74	0.00%	0
75 or older	0.00%	0
Total		11

Dmin project outcome

SurveyMonkey

Q3 How long have you attended NJPC?

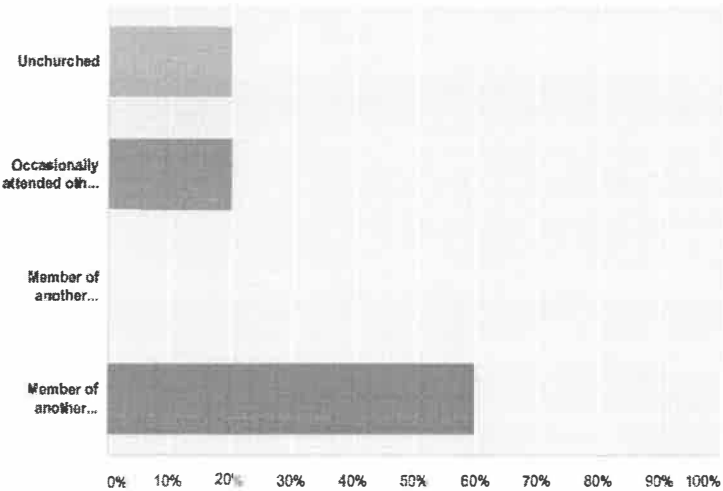
Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses
3 to 5 years	54.55% 6
5 to 10 years	18.18% 2
More than 10 years	27.27% 3
Total	11

Q4 How would you describe your church life prior to NJPC?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 2



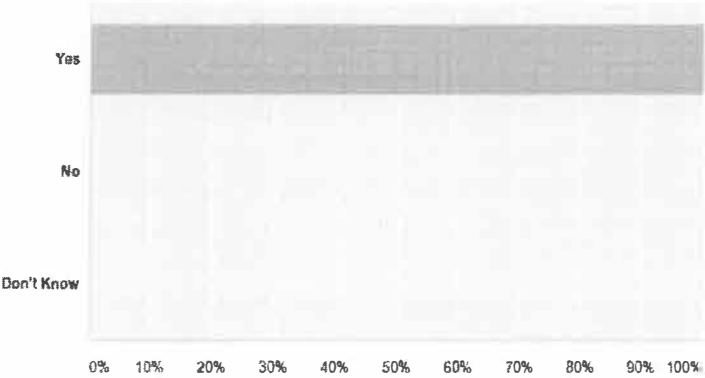
Answer Choices	Responses
Unchurched	20.00% 2
Occasionally attended other churches	20.00% 2
Member of another Presbyterian congregation	0.00% 0
Member of another denomination	60.00% 6
Total	10

Dmin project outcome

SurveyMonkey

Q5 This project has enhanced my knowledge of holiness theology.

Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



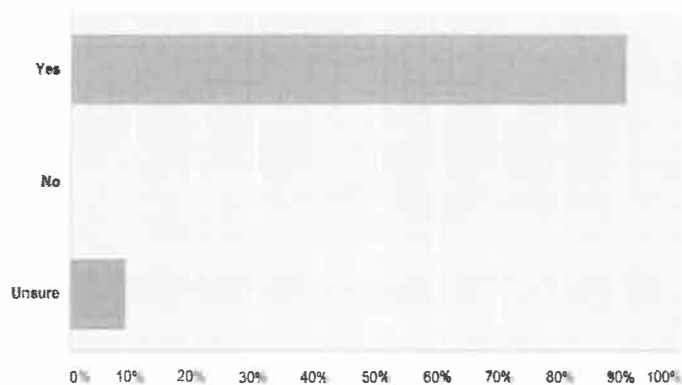
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	100.00%	11
No	0.00%	0
Don't Know	0.00%	0
Total		11

Dmin project outcome

SurveyMonkey

Q6 In the past four years I have become more aware of the Holy Spirit's presence in my life.

Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



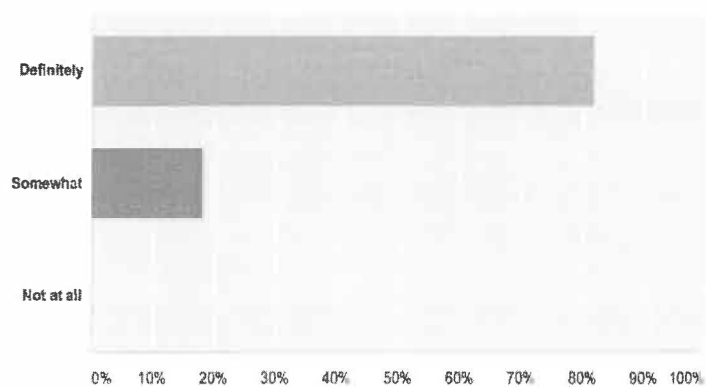
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	90.91%	10
No	0.00%	0
Unsure	9.09%	1
Total		11

Dmin project outcome

SurveyMonkey

Q7 In the last four years my relationship with Christ has grown deeper

Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



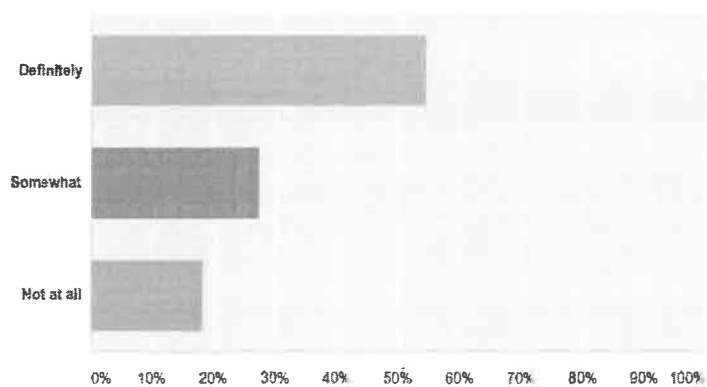
Answer Choices	Responses
Definitely	81.82% 9
Somewhat	18.18% 2
Not at all	0.00% 0
Total	11

Dmin project outcome

SurveyMonkey

Q8 In the last 4 years I have become more evangelistic

Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



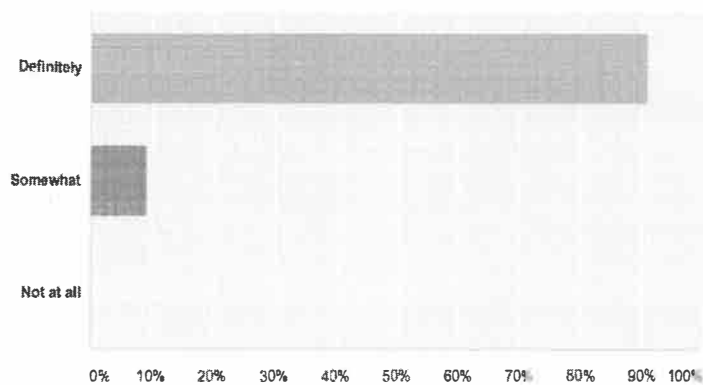
Answer Choices	Responses
Definitely	54.55% 6
Somewhat	27.27% 3
Not at all	18.18% 2
Total	11

Dmin project outcome

SurveyMonkey

Q9 In the past 4 years NJPC has become more evangelistic

Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



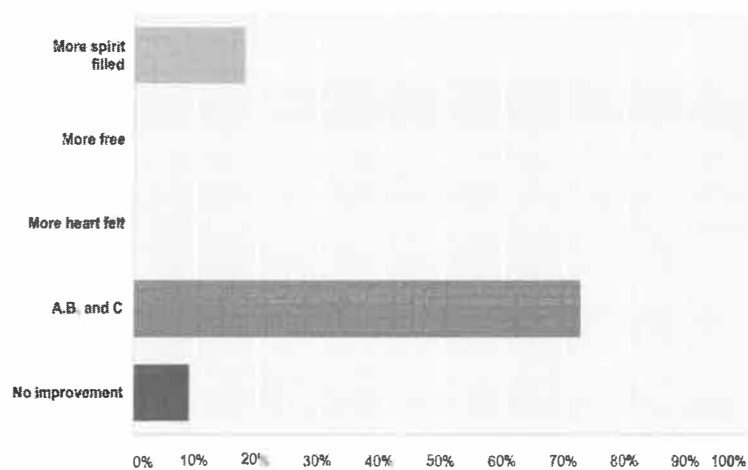
Answer Choices	Responses	
Definitely	90.91%	10
Somewhat	9.09%	1
Not at all	0.00%	0
Total		11

Dmin project outcome

SurveyMonkey

Q10 How has NJPC's worship life improved as a result of this project?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



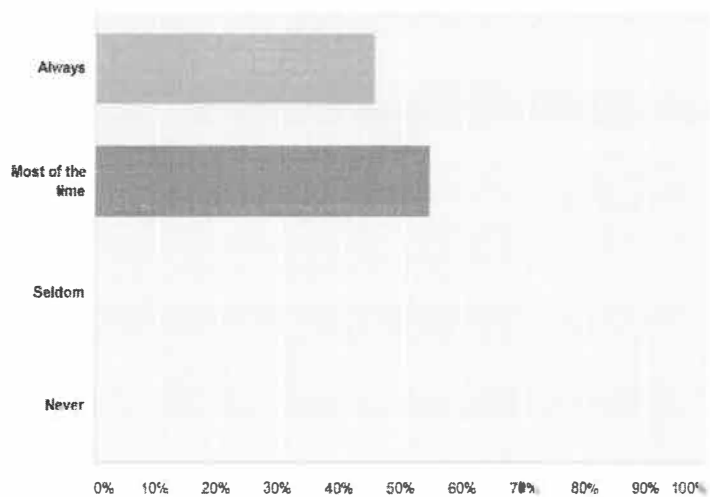
Answer Choices	Responses	
More spirit filled	18.18%	2
More free	0.00%	0
More heart felt	0.00%	0
A B, and C	72.73%	8
No improvement	9.09%	1
Total		11

Dmin project outcome

SurveyMonkey

Q11 I sense the presence of the Holy Spirit in worship

Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



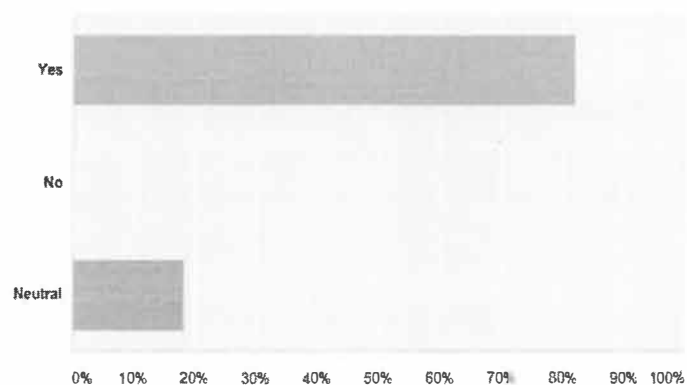
Answer Choices	Responses
Always	45.45% 5
Most of the time	54.55% 6
Seldom	0.00% 0
Never	0.00% 0
Total	11

Dmin project outcome

SurveyMonkey

**Q12 The quality of the pastor's preaching
has improved in the last 4 years**

Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



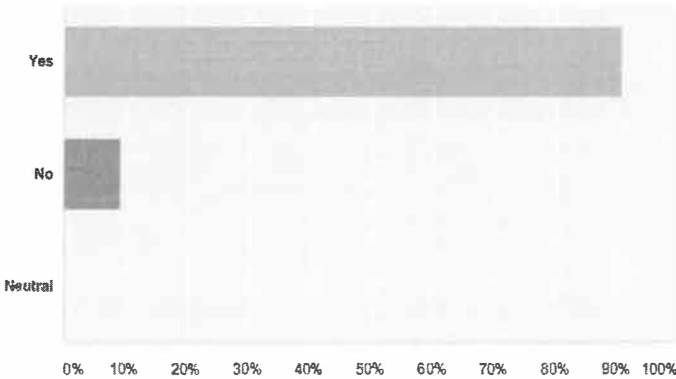
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	81.82%	9
No	0.00%	0
Neutral	18.18%	2
Total		11

Dmin project outcome

SurveyMonkey

Q13 The quality of the music has improved in the last 4 years

Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



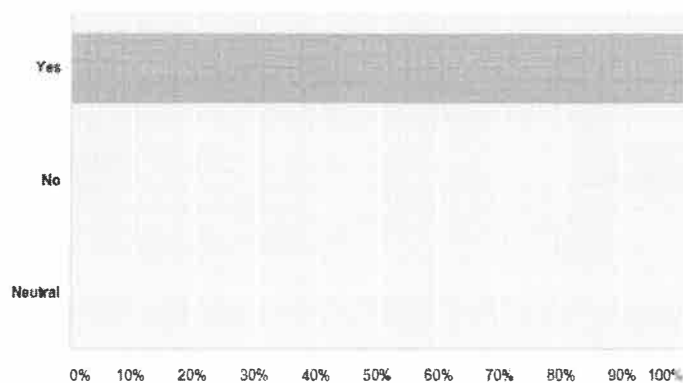
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	90.91%	10
No	9.09%	1
Neutral	0.00%	0
Total		11

Dmin project outcome

SurveyMonkey

Q14 NJPC has become more involved in the community in the last 4 years

Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



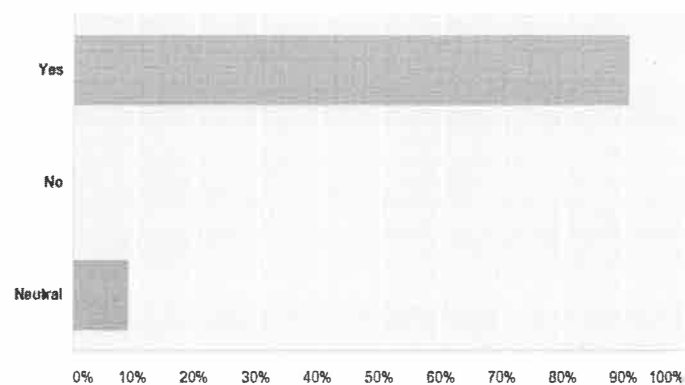
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	100.00%	11
No	0.00%	0
Neutral	0.00%	0
Total		11

Dmin project outcome

SurveyMonkey

**Q15 I believe this project has helped
improve the quality of NJPC's ministry**

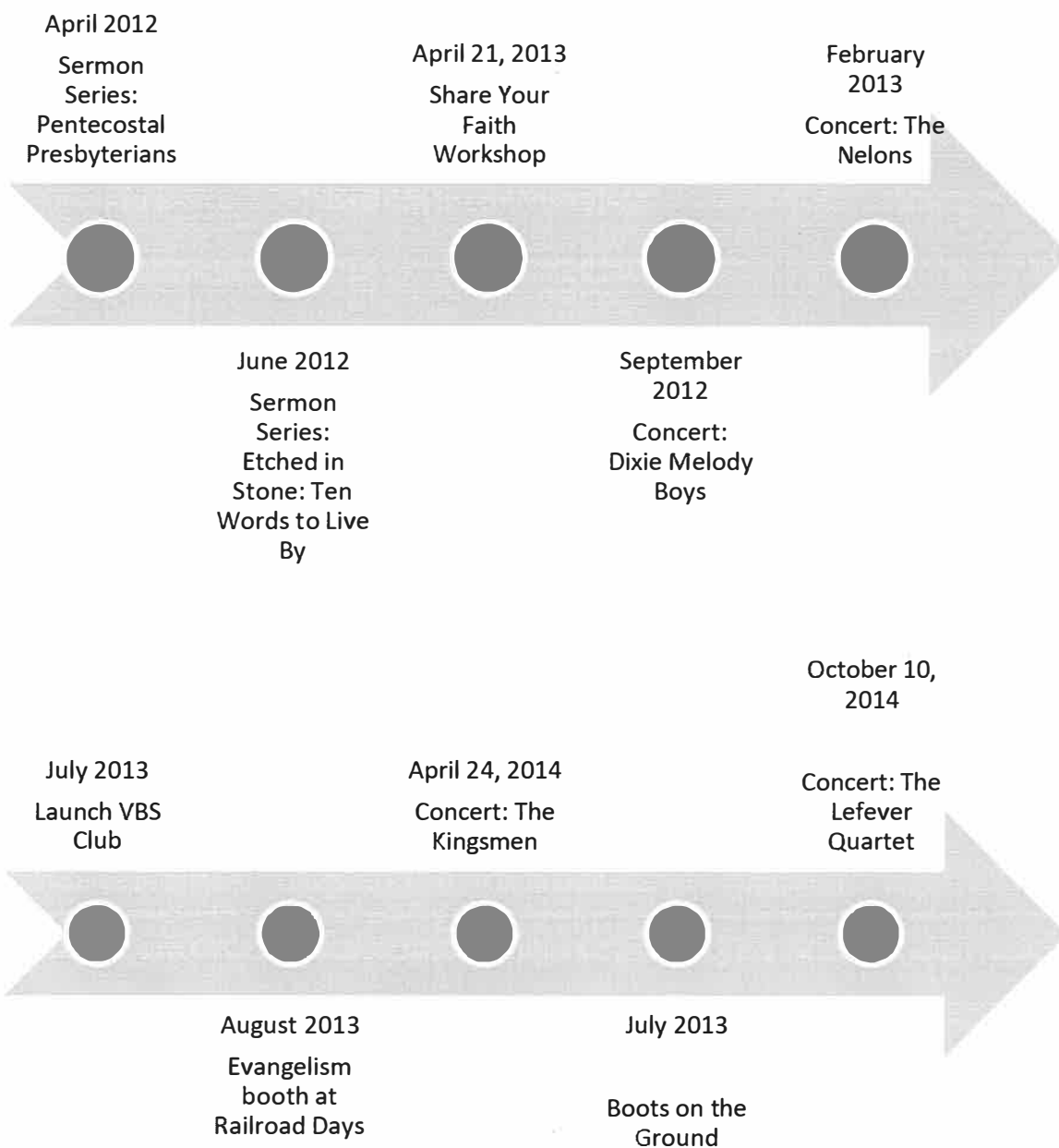
Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	90.91% 10
No	0.00% 0
Neutral	9.09% 1
Total	11

APPENDIX D

PROJECT TIMELINE



APPENDIX E

SERMON SERIES: “PENTECOSTAL PRESBYTERIANS

April 15, 2012

Isaiah 6:1-8

Luke 5:1-11

“Holy is the Lord”

April 22, 2012

Exodus 19:1-6

1 Peter 1:22 – 2:12

“Peculiar People”

April 29, 2012

1 John 1:7,8, 15-25

“Antichrist Revealed”

May 6, 2012

Ezekiel 36:16-28

Hebrews 9:11-15

“The Heart of the Matter”

May 20, 2012

Ephesians 4:17-32

“New and Improved”

May 27, 2012

Day of Pentecost

Malachi 3:1-4

Acts 1:1-11

“Pentecostal Power”

June 3, 2012

Genesis 3:1-13, 20-24

2 Timothy 3:12 – 4:8

“Did God Really Say That?”

APPENDIX F

SERMON SERIES: “ETCHED IN STONE: TEN WORDS TO LIVE BY”

June 17, 2012

Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-24

“Owned by the Great I Am” (Exodus 20:1-2)

June 24, 2012

Exodus 20:1-6

1 Corinthians 10:1-22

“In Gods We Trust”

July 1, 2012

Exodus 3:1-14

Exodus 20:7

“What’s In a Name?”

July 8, 2012

Exodus 20:8-11

“Holiday Faith”

July 15, 2012

Exodus 20:12

Ephesians 6:1-4

“God’s Family Values”

July 29, 2012

Exodus 20:13

Matthew 5:17-26

“A Modest Proposal for Peace”

August 5, 2012

Exodus 20:14

Mark 10:1-12

“Semper Fidelis”

August 12, 2012

Exodus 20:15

Malachi 3:6-12

Luke 12:13-21

“Thieves in High Places”

August 19, 2012
Exodus 20:16
Matthew 5:33-37
“To Tell the Truth”

August 26, 2012
Exodus 20:17
James 3:13 – 4:8
“Affluenza”

APPENDIX G

SERMON SKETCH: "STANDING ON THE ROCK"

Standing on the Rock

Matthew 16:13-20 (Isaiah 51:1-6)

Special Meeting of Presbytery

Corinth PC 7-22-2014

“The gates of Hell shall not prevail...” – Well, somebody forgot to tell the gates of Hell about that! They didn’t get the memo. Ever since the lifeless body of Jesus was taken down from the cross the gates of Hell have been pretty sure they will prevail. I know, I know, before somebody raises their hand and accuses me of sloppy Biblical scholarship, the text doesn’t actually say “Hell.” The correct translation is “hades” but what the hell? This translation makes for a much more poetic refrain.

ON THIS ROCK...

Some people don’t take Hell seriously. One of the funniest cartoons I ever saw was an old Farside cartoon. There was a picture of Hell with two large devils standing there with pitchforks. There in the midst of the flames was this one guy pushing a wheelbarrow full of rocks with a big smile on his face, whistling while he worked. One devil turned to the other devil and said, “I just don’t think we’re getting through to this guy.” – Hell is no laughing matter.

When I was in college down in Nashville some of my friends used to go out witnessing on the streets. One night my friend Chuck Seay was witnessing to this guy and the guy said he didn’t believe in Jesus. Said he was a devil worshiper. Chuck said, “I don’t believe in the devil. “The Devil worshiper said, “What do you mean you don’t believe in the devil? Don’t you read your Bible?” Imagine that – a devil worshiper standing on the authority of Scripture. Now that’s funny right there! What my friend meant was not that he didn’t believe in the devil so much as that he didn’t believe in the devil so many other people believe in, a cartoon character devil with horns and a pitchfork. Chuck would be the first to tell you there are dark forces in this world, principalities and powers more malevolent and far reaching than cartoon character devils with pitchforks and horns. The very power of death itself is aligned against the church of Jesus Christ like a mighty army. They intend to fight with every fiber of their being to do us in. Sometimes it even looks like they’re getting the upper hand but, thank God almighty for the promise of Jesus...

ON THIS ROCK...

Now to get a good perspective on this text you have to understand the setting. Caesarea Philippi – also known as Baal Hermon and Baal Gad in the Old Testament. Located in the foothills of Mt. Hermon about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, this place was a notorious center of idol worship. It had once been dedicated to the worship of the Greek god Pan and by the time of Jesus it had become a shrine to the worship of Caesar. There is a gigantic rock wall with niches carved into it, each one containing a different idol. Here, in the midst of all these idols, Jesus asks the question, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” Good question. Some say, “John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Here’s a better question. Who do we say the Son of Man is?

Liberal hippie guru? Right wing reactionary? A Jesus who would do what we would do and think what we would think?

Just as in Jesus’ time we too live in a pagan society surrounded by idols. The unholy trinity of me, myself and I. The god of mutual orgasms. I mean, have you looked at TV lately? How many male enhancement products do we really need anyway? We live in a society that is literally drowning in a sea of sexual and moral confusion, where the chief end of man is not “To glorify God and enjoy him forever” but rather to glorify self and have as much pleasure as we can stand.

And here’s the Christian church trying to tell everybody they can be Christians without giving up their idols. We want everybody to like us so we think we can offer the world a milquetoast Jesus that won’t require anything of them. Along the way the question becomes, are we even offering anyone anything important enough NOT to believe in?

If we’re not careful we can even turn Jesus into an idol. JESUS PEOPLE of the hippie era (I was one of those). Jesus as a wandering guru who taught nice things. Let’s all strap on our WWJD bracelets and teach everybody to be nice. Or we can all go out and engage in social and political activism and tell ourselves we’re being prophetic. After all, Jesus was a nice guy who loved children, right? If that’s all he was about why on earth would anybody go to all the trouble of KILLING HIM?

Jesus was not just a prophet or a nice teacher who loved children and taught nice things. HE IS THE CHRIST! THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD!!

I want you to notice something here. “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”

Good Lord, have we forgotten how we got here? We’re Presbyterians for goodness’ sake. We of all people should know that we are not here of our own accord.

We were drifting along, minding our own business, wandering around gazing at all the pretty idols and we got ambushed by the Holy Spirit of God! One day when we least expected it all of a sudden we looked up and realized, by God, I believe! **YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD!**

That is why the church exists, to proclaim that message to an unbelieving world. Otherwise we are not offering the world anything they cannot find anywhere else.

ON THIS ROCK ...

Of course things are not bad all over. Presbyterians in other parts of the world are doing just fine.

PCEA (Presbyterian Church of East Africa) – Founded 1891 by missionaries from Scotland. 4 million members. Sending missionaries to America. (Migwe Kimemia)

ON THIS ROCK...

Over 10 million Presbyterians in Korea in over 110 different presby denominations (wonder where they got that idea from)

It all started in Northern Korea in 1884 with a Presbyterian missionary named Horace Allen. Now they’re sending missionaries all over the world. The first General Assembly was just recently organized in Russia by, of course, Korean Presbyterians.

Today, North Korea tops the list of 50 most hostile countries to Christianity. The Great Leader, the Dear Leader and the little fat baby faced leader, whatever he wants to be called, have tried to convince the people that they are gods. You don’t need Jesus. The Leader will take care of all of your needs.

Good luck with that. Korean Christianity began in North Korea and you can bet the family farm there are still Presbyterians in North Korea...**COUNT ON IT!**

ON THIS ROCK...

Well, the gates of Hell might not prevail against the church of Jesus Christ but they may indeed prevail against the PCUSA at the rate we're going. Let's be honest. Things are not looking good.

PCUSA shrunk from 4 million to 1.7 million since 1965. US population added 123 million same length of time. Seems to me we're going the wrong way.

But even here in the Presbytery of the Miami Valley it isn't all bad news. Take the Covington congregation for example. There is a church that was on the verge of closing the doors just a few short years ago. Today they are averaging 75 in morning worship and growing. This coming Sunday they will baptize 7 new believers, all of them teenagers.

ON THIS ROCK...

The turnaround at Covington started when they called Greg Kurtz to be their pastor. Greg is not from our tradition. He is a former Baptist who is a school teacher by trade and is now a Presbyterian ruling elder. I asked Greg what his secret is. You know what he said? "No secret. I'm just preaching the Word."

Now don't hear me saying that the rest of you are NOT preaching the Word. You have to settle that question in your own conscience.

But let us ask ourselves this one very important question:

What do we have to offer that cannot be found elsewhere? CHRIST! The one thing that makes Christians, well, Christian, is Christ! These days it seems we preachers want to talk about anything and everything except the One whom it's all about.

Shall I spell it out? The church is not a social action agency. The church is not a political action committee. The church does not exist to tote the water for the Democrats or the Republicans and the church does not exist to wave the flag or thump the tub for America. The church does not exist to teach religion to children or to spruce up everybody's morals, as David Buttrick would say. The church exists for one reason and one reason only and that is to preach the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. He is the Christ, the son of the living God ... born of a virgin, suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, dead and buried, risen from the dead!

He is our Lord and our God! A church dedicated to preaching and living out that confession will not fail. Why? ON THIS ROCK...

ON CHRIST THE SOLID ROCK I STAND! ALL OTHER GROUND IS SINKING SAND.

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